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BAPTISTS

Exec. Comm. taps Pinkerton, Boydston

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Members of the 2006-07 Executive Committee of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) held their organizational meeting December 5 at the Baptist Building in Jackson and elected Gary Richardson, pastor of North Oxford Church, Oxford, to lead the group.

Elected to serve with Richardson, a former convention board president, was Mississippi Secretary of State Eric Clark, a member of First Church, Brandon, as vice-president. Rebecca Williams, a member of Broadmoor Church, Madison, will serve as secretary.

The Executive Committee also filled two MBCB positions recently vacated by retiring employees. Wayne Pinkerton, associate pastor of administration and education at First Church, Biloxi, will replace Larry Salter as procurement officer. Salter worked for the convention board for 31 years.

Angie Boydston, minister to children at Pinelake Church, Brandon, was chosen to serve as consultant for preschool and children in the MBCB Sunday School Department. She replaces Linda Reeves, who retired after nearly 17 years with the convention board.

Pinkerton served First Church, Biloxi, for six years. Prior to that, he was church administrator, education minister, and youth minister at First Church, Greenville, from 1990-01. He was teacher, coach, and headmaster at Sharkey-Issaquena Academy in Rolling Fork from 1981-90; headmaster at Winona Academy in Winona from 1987-89; and principal at Hillcrest Academy in Jackson from 1986-87.

Pinkerton also played shortstop in the Texas Rangers organization from 1975-80.



Pinkerton



Boydston

She is a two-time president of the Mississippi Children's Education Association, and serves as an Equipper for the MBCB Sunday School Department.

Boydston holds a master of arts in religious education from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, and a bachelor of arts in educational psychology from Mississippi State University. She will begin her new duties on January 1.

"Angie Boydston has a heart for building disciples to minister to children. She radiates with love for children, their parents, and the possibilities for meeting their

needs," said Kiely D. Young, director of the MBCB Sunday School Department. "We are blessed to have a lady of her expertise... to join our team."

In other business, the Executive Committee authorized a special offering for Mississippi Baptists' Memorial to the Missing to coincide with the January anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion nationwide throughout the nine months of pregnancy.

The Memorial to the Missing, located on the grounds of the Baptist Building in Jackson, is a large, custom-built container designed to hold 50 million pennies — one penny for each abortion that has taken place in America since the *Roe v. Wade* decision.

Jimmy Porter, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission, said more details on the special offering will be forthcoming as planning is completed over the next several weeks.

Prior to that, she was minister of childhood education at First Church, Hattiesburg from 1993-97, and minister of childhood education at First Church, Cabot, Ar., from 1992-93.

Miss. CP rises in November

Gifts to the work of the Lord through the Mississippi Cooperative Program (CP) in November reflected a rise from the previous month but was down slightly over the same giving period last year, according to Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson. The November total of \$3,006,512, was \$722,160, or 31.6%, higher than the \$2,284,352 given last month, and \$203,684, or 6.3% lower the total given in November 2005. Total Mississippi CP giving for the current fiscal year, which runs from January-December, stands at \$31,206,668, a rise of \$1,450,023, or 4.9%, over last year's giving through November and \$2,501,718, or 8.72%, ahead of current budget needs. The 2006 Mississippi CP budget of \$31,314,491, was approved by messengers to the 2005 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. A total of \$2,609,541 is needed each month to meet the convention board's budget for 2006. In addition to helping support more than 10,700 missionaries in the U.S. and around the world through affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention, Mississippi CP helps fund such programs as Youth Evangelism Conference Challenge on December 28-29 at Mississippi College in Clinton.

SBC CP up for month, year

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — November contributions through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program (CP) totaled \$15,770,935, or 2.7%, higher than the \$15,358,956 given the previous month and 5.7%, or \$854,827 above the \$14,916,108 received in November 2005. As of Nov. 30, 2006, the year-to-date total of \$31,129,891 for Cooperative Program (CP) missions is \$327,140 ahead of the \$30,802,750 received at the same point in 2005. Designated giving of \$6,647,078 for the same year-to-date period is 3.9%, or \$271,680, below gifts of \$6,918,758 received at this point last year. The \$3,758,208 in designated gifts received last month is \$391,698 above the \$3,366,510 received in November 2005, an increase of 11.6%. For the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, the year-to-date total of \$31,129,891.03 is 95.3% of the \$32,658,070 budgeted to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention.



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Remember the martyrs, always

The year 2006 brought many great advances in the quest to fulfill our Lord's Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Opportunities that existed only in dreams a few years ago all of a sudden became reality.

Doors opened that had been closed for decades. The eyes, ears, and hearts of so many people were tuned to hear and understand the Gospel message, that it seemed the whole world was yearning to know. More Mississippi Baptists than ever went to more places to witness to more people than anyone could have imagined, and the missions tempo is quickening as we look forward to 2007.

Before we direct our prayers and our resources to the future and its enormous potential, however, we should take a moment to give God the glory for the victories gained in His service during 2006 — and remember the martyrs.

Always, we should remember the martyrs.

On March 15, 2004, Larry T. Elliott, Jean Dover Elliott, David E. McDonnall, and Karen Watson became the latest Southern Baptist workers to be killed in the line of duty. They were researching humanitarian projects in northern Iraq near Mosul when a vehicle pulled alongside their vehicle and the occupants opened fire with automatic weapons. McDonnall's wife Carrie was critically injured but survived the ambush.

A few short hours before 2003 dawned, three Southern Baptist missionaries lost their lives and a fourth missionary was wounded at Jibla Baptist Hospital in Jibla, Yemen. Surgeon Martha Myers, hospital administrator Bill Koehn, and supply manager Kathleen Gariety were murdered by a Muslim extremist as they went about their normal hospital duties. Pharmacist Don Caswell was crit-



ically wounded but has recovered and returned to the mission field.

While Southern Baptists were still reeling from the Jibla tragedy, missionary William P. "Bill" Hyde was killed and another missionary and her two children seriously injured when a terrorist bomb exploded at the airport at Davao City in the Philippines.

Hyde was at the airport to pick up the Stevens family, Southern Baptist missionaries who were returning from a short vacation. Barbara Stevens was injured in the blast, as were her daughter Sarah, age four at the time, and son Nathan, 10 months old at the time.

Husband and father Mark Stevens was not injured in the explosion.

At least 20 other people were killed and 144 more people injured by the bomb, which detonated inside a bus shelter crowded with people trying to escape a downpour.

Family friend Ed Gregory, missions team leader for the Baptist Convention of Iowa, described Bill Hyde as a spirited missionary who "kept retraining, fulfilling different roles, teaching, church planting. He was constantly developing Filipino pastors, helping them get new work started, and then mentoring them in their roles."

The losses of these great men and women are only the most recent in a long string of Southern Baptist martyrs dating back to 1861 (see article below), but even through such tragedy and upheaval we press onward toward the prize.

During this war against terrorism in the midst of which we currently find ourselves, national political leaders are quick to remind us that the battle will be long and hard-fought, that those who fall in battle will be many, and that the cause will ultimately be worth the steep price we are now paying.

The same can be said of the spiritual warfare that rages all around us. The battle that Christians have been fighting for 2,000 years has also been long and hard-fought, and the casualties have been high. However, we already know the great victory is ours.

May we walk boldly in the big footprints left by the martyrs, and may we lift high the banner for which they died. Their blood demands no less from us, the people privileged to be called by the name Christian.

Updated and expanded from an editorial that originally appeared in the December 18, 2003, edition of The Baptist Record.

Southern Baptist missionaries give lives on field

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Southern Baptist workers, by the very nature of their daily life and ministry in communities throughout the world, have always lived with a measure of danger during the 158-year history of the Foreign Mission Board and its successor, the International Mission Board. Remarkably, however, only 25 workers among the many thousands sent out have been killed on the mission field in violent circumstances since 1845. They are:

• **March 15, 2004** — Larry T. Elliott, Jean Dover Elliott, David E. McDonnall, and Karen Watson. Ambushed and shot to death near Mosul, Iraq, while researching humanitarian projects.

• **March 4, 2003** — Bill Hyde, working in Philippines. Killed by a terrorist bomb planted at Davao City Airport.

• **December 30, 2002** — Bill Koehn, Martha Myers, and Kathy Gariety, working at Jibla Baptist Hospital in

Jibla, Yemen. Murdered by a Muslim extremist.

• **April 21, 1998** — Charles W. Hood Jr., working in Colombia, South America. Shot to death in his front yard by robbers.

• **March 23, 1995** — Chu Hon and Kei Yi, Khabarovsk, working in Russia. Murdered in their locked apartment.

• **March 27, 1991** — Lynda Bethea, working in Kenya. Beaten to death by highway robbers near Kijabe, Kenya. Her husband Larry was also brutally beaten but survived.

• **October 2, 1990** — Mary Anna Gilbert, working in China. Killed in crash of hijacked Chinese jetliner in Guangzhou, China (teacher with Cooperative Services International).

• **November 26, 1986** — Libby Senter, working in Liberia. Murdered along with her daughter Rachel.

• **October 11, 1985** — James Philpot, working in Mexico.

Shot dead during an altercation following a minor automobile accident.

• **June 15, 1978** — Archie G. Dunaway Jr., working in Rhodesia. Killed by guerrillas seeking an African-majority government in the white-ruled, former British colony.

• **March 11, 1973** — Gladys Hopewell, working in Taiwan. No details of her murder were available.

• **January 16, 1972** — Mavis Pate, working in the Gaza area of the Middle East. Shot by Arab guerrillas in ambush as she drove near a refugee camp.

• **July 7, 1971** — Paul E. and Nancy Potter, working in the Dominican Republic. No details of their murders were available.

• **February 10, 1951** — William L. Wallace, working in China, died in communist prison. Many people familiar with Wallace's case believe the physician was tortured to death by the Communist Chinese.

• **January 1942** — Rufas F. Gray, working in China. Died in Japanese camp for war prisoners in Baguio, Philippines.

• **December 1880** — John Westrup, working in Mexico. Murdered by band of 20 Indians and Mexicans while traveling from Santa Rosa to Monterey.

• **October 1, 1861** — J. Landrum Holmes, working in China. Murdered while attempting to dissuade invaders from attacking the village of Chu Kia on Shantung Peninsula during the Taiping Rebellion.

Additionally, 40 Southern Baptist workers have been killed in accidents during the history of IMB and FMB, and many more workers have been victims of kidnappings, assaults, carjackings, and other major crimes. A total of 18 deaths — including 12 in China — were reported prior to 1937 but without a listed cause of death.

Source: International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Richmond, Va.

Far-flung people group focus of mission

SENEGAL, West Africa — Tom Smith sometimes gets discouraged, and he's not ashamed to admit it. As a missionary strategy coordinator, Tom and his wife Shirley face the daily challenge of reaching the Futa Toro (FOO-tah TOR-oh), a Muslim people numbering more than two million.

It's not just their size that gives Tom pause. It's their far-flung locations and bewildering diversity.

The Futa Toro actually comprise two major subgroups of the Fulani peoples of West Africa: the semi-nomadic, cattle-herding Fulbe (FULL-bay) and the more settled Tukulor (TOO-kuh-lor). They live in many clans and castes scattered throughout northern Senegal and parts of The Gambia, Guinea, Mali and Mauritania.

"It's easy to become discouraged when we see the immensity of the task and so few results, so few workers, so few believers," Tom says, rubbing the sun from his weary eyes after a long day's drive through the scorched back roads of northern Senegal. "Sometimes I wonder why God called me."

At such moments, however, a divine voice speaks in silence to his heart: "You just do your part. Don't worry about My part; I'll take care of that."

Other times, God sends encouragement and excitement through a changed — or changing — life:

- Samba, an imposing young Fulbe man who wears flashy designer shades and a long dagger strapped inside his colorful robe, doesn't look at first glance like a seeker of truth, but he can quote long sections of dialogue from the "JESUS" film word for word — complete with dramatic expression. The Smiths think he already has become a believer in Christ, though he hasn't yet declared it.

- Hawa, a housekeeper, decided to follow Jesus after listening to cassette copies of all 100 lessons in the Way of Righteousness Bible storying series as she cleaned the home of Debbie Hawkins, a missionary on the Smiths' team.



MAKING FRIENDS — A Futa Toro man (center) prepares tea for missionary Tom Smith. Called "Ataaya" in Senegal and by various names in other African countries, the tea is served in three rounds, each sweeter than the next. The tradition is meant to symbolize the deepening of friendship. (IMB photo)

Debbie now discipled her and several other women who are considering baptism. Hawa, a young widow, isn't afraid to speak publicly of her faith in Christ, even though she has drawn the ire of the uncle upon whom she depends for shelter and community acceptance.

- Mamadou, a Fulbe elder, warmly welcomes the Smiths whenever they visit his family compound, where he sits in the sandy courtyard surrounded by his wives, children, sisters, nieces and nephews. He's heard the Gospel for years from his missionary friends and other Christian workers. He has no objection to his children becoming disciples of Jesus. In fact, he's not far from the Kingdom of God himself. But he hesitates.

"I have too many people behind me," Mamadou explains — too many relatives and clan members who would be drastically affected by his decision. If and when Mamadou decides to follow Jesus, however, he predicts, "I will bring hundreds with me."

That's a day for which the Smiths are living and praying. It's why they transferred to

Senegal in the 1990s from Sierra Leone, where they served as International Mission Board missionaries for five years (before that, they worked in Liberia for 10 years).

"We had a rewarding ministry in Sierra Leone, but because of the ongoing civil war there we were confined with all the other missionaries to the capital," says Tom, now 55. "There was a church on every corner. We became more and more convinced that we needed to go to people who hadn't had a chance to hear the Gospel."

"The needs are unmistakable all over West Africa, but this is the particular people God led us to."

The challenges in reaching the Futa Toro abound. They're staunchly Muslim, so persecution often follows baptism. Many Fulbe follow their herds from one place to another in an endless search for water and grazing land. The Fulbe gather in tight clans that have little interaction with each other. The Tukulor, proud of their status as the first black Africans to convert to Islam, divide themselves into classes nearly as rigid as India's caste system.

With all these clan and class divisions, "We're really talking about two dozen or more unreached people groups," Tom says. "That's why it's so important we pray that members from each group accept Christ."

Individual Fulbe and Tukulor are coming to Christ. Perhaps 250 or more believers now live in the region, at least 100 of whom have been baptized. The biggest challenge is gathering them into disciple groups and congregations that will multiply into a church-planting movement.

That's Tom's top priority as strategy coordinator for the Futa Toro. He networks with other missionaries and stays on the lookout for ideas, connections and key partners, such as Korean and Brazilian Baptist missionaries coming to Senegal.

"Word gets around that I'm the guy to talk to," Tom explains. "We can't do it by ourselves. It's too big, too spread out, too complex for any one group."

The church-planting movement among the Futa Toro won't happen without prayer, and lots of it. "This is a task only God can accomplish," Tom says.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

**THE SECOND
FRONT PAGE**

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Tell me the story of Jesus

What would you give so she can hear?

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

Our Goal ime.imb.org

Looking back

10 years ago

Rick Warren, pastor of one of the fastest-growing churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, turns down an invitation to become the first president of the North American Mission Board.

20 years ago

Royal Ambassadors of Second Avenue Church, Laurel, sell loaves of homemade bread for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The group raises over \$200 to contribute toward the church's goal of \$6,000.

60 years ago

Latest estimates show that Southern Baptist Sunday Schools will reach a record high in 1946 with 3,750,373 enrolled — a gain of 225,063 for the year. Training Union enrollment climbed 99,141 during the year to reach 802,473.



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with God in your own words:

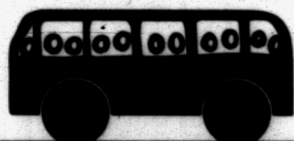
1. Lord, I admit that I need you.
(*I have sinned.*)
2. I want forgiveness for my
sins and freedom from eternal
death. (*I repent.*)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose
from the grave to forgive my
sins and to restore my rela-
tionship with you.
(*I believe in Jesus.*)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus
Christ into my life. From this
time on, I want to live in a lov-
ing relationship with Him. (*I
receive Christ as my Savior
and Lord.*)

"But as many as received him,
to them he gave the right to become
children of God, even to those who
believe in his name." (John 1:12)

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Jesus Christ today, contact a
local Baptist church for spiritu-
al guidance.

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IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR

Indulge me for just a moment
and let me sing for you. If you
want to you can hum along with
me — "It's the most wonderful
time of the year ..." Well, that is
what the song says about
Christmas. It is not a hymn. It is
not even a Christmas Carol. It is
just a sweet Christmas song that
reminds us that it is the most
wonderful time of the year. The
fact is that in spite of commer-
cialism and atheism or even
apathy or gluttony it still well
may be true that this is the most
wonderful time of the year. It is
the sights, sounds, efforts at
being nice, and the friendliness
even from some of the store
clerks after they have had a hard
day of putting up with folks like
us. It is not often that a fellow
can walk down the street
singing Joy to the World with-
out being looked at as though
the mental health authorities
need to be contacted.

It is the most wonderful time
of the year because like it or not
the world moves to a different
pace with a different sound and
sway because God's Son clothed
Himself in human flesh and
came to live with us, love us,
and die for our sins. With that
said I recognize that many of us
have the right and the reason to
argue the case against this being
the most wonderful time of the
year. It may not seem wonderful
to you. To be perfectly honest, to
the very first Christmas it did
not seem to be the most won-
derful time of the year either
because of the **disruptions**.

Just think about it. Virtually
everybody in the Christmas
story is experiencing **disrup-**
tions in their lives. Mary and
Joseph were expecting a child
and traveling a great distance
from Nazareth to Bethlehem
only to find out that there is
nowhere to stay and it is time
for the child to be born. Can you



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

imagine the anxiety, uncertainty,
and emotional trauma that
Joseph must have been feeling
as he tried to deal with a young
wife who is struggling with the
pains, uncertainties, and ques-
tions of child birth? What?
When? How? Where? Neither
Mary nor Joseph had the
answers. No doubt there are
many of you who have experi-
enced **disruptions** in your life
and possibly in the events of this
week. You have wondered
what, when, where, and how,
only to find there were no easy,
ready answers available, but
you pressed on trusting God.
Huge **disruptions** come our
way and yours may have been
named cancer, Katrina, fire, or
death. You have wondered how
you will deal with it. My singing
in your ear — "It's the most won-
derful time of year ..." — does
not change your circumstances
and seems to have an empty
ring to it until you see
Christmas with its **disruptions**
in its true light. Mary and
Joseph faced the future trusting
God. They were away from
home and family, but they were
not away from the protective
hand of God. **Disrupted** by the
government and their own per-
sonal circumstances they found
God at work in incredible ways.

I have thought so many times
of something I read decades
ago. A writer suggested that you
take the word disappointment
and change the "d" to an "h"
and see His appointment.
People of faith seem to have an
unusual and glorious way of
seeing the world not just filled

with disappointments but, as
with Mary and Joseph, seeing
His appointments.

For others it is not the won-
derful time of the year because of
those things that are **corruptive**. I
am speaking here of our sins that
are always poisonous, corroding,
and ultimately deadly. If you
study the Christmas story in
Scripture, you cannot help but
pause and reflect on the strug-
gles that are taking place in King
Herod's life. He heard that
another king had been born, so
deceptively he tries to find out
whom and where He is and pre-
tends that he desires to worship
Him. In fact, Herod was afraid
that a new ruler would challenge
his own reign, his own thought
process, and his own control.
That is the nature of any and all
sin. We want to step in and have
our way as opposed to God's
way. From taking the fruit in the
garden of Eden to the latest deci-
sion making process in our own
hearts, we can allow self to rule
our will and to dominate, but it is
always to our detriment. Sin and
its residue always **corrupt**.
Occasionally, you will hear
someone talk about secret sins.
There is a tendency to think that
they are not so bad because they
are not known and they are just
kept under wraps. But all sin
whether quietly committed or on
a huge public stage brings cor-
ruption, and it cannot be avoid-
ed. That is why, like Herod, you
cannot live deceptively and be
happy. Your heart cannot be
filled with bitterness and hate
and experience joy. Sin and its
corruptive nature can make the

sound of — "It's the most won-
derful time of the year ..." — seem
trite and even stupid. The very
first announcement of Jesus'
coming revealed that, "His name
would be Jesus for He would
save His people from their sins."
He alone can make it the most
wonderful time of the year.

A final thought is that it may
not seem like the most won-
derful time of the year because of
eruptions. Out on the hillsides
of Judea shepherds were watch-
ing their flocks and then angels
appeared. Soon their announce-
ment erupted into a chorus of
praise and it seemed that all of
heaven would join in singing —
"Glory to God in the highest and
on earth peace good will to men."
You do remember though that
Scripture says they were afraid
as though heaven doing some-
thing completely wonderful in
their midst was not a good
thing. Here is an interesting
thing about the **eruption**. They
interpreted it as a bad and
frightening experience while it
was actually a good and glori-
ous event. At Christmas and
throughout the year it is inter-
esting to watch us mortals
struggle with God doing some-
thing around us using people in
new and different ways and
bringing us into new and excit-
ing expressions of praise to Him
that we may not recognize or
feel comfortable. It can be a
message or a mission effort, a
song or some new instrument
and we forget that God is bigger
than all of those things — and,
in fact, He can be working
through the very things from
which we recoil. All of which
brings me to say, or even better,
let me just sing it for you one
more time. "It's the most won-
derful time of the year ..." for when
Jesus remains the central and
constant focus of your life that
simple song is always true.

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Missionaries learn to persevere when 'bad' things happen

SENEGAL, West Africa — Something bad always happened on Tuesday. Not necessarily disastrous, just bad. Something distracting or debilitating enough to make it hard for Elliott and Pat Nichols to get to the village.

Tuesdays were the days the Southern Baptist missionary couple had set aside to drive from the town where they live in northern Senegal to a Wolof (WUHLuf) village in the area. The village chief had given them permission to come every week for a year to teach 52 chronological Bible stories. Each story builds on the previous one, brick by brick, to lay the foundation of God's salvation from Genesis to Revelation.

When each Tuesday rolled around, either Elliott or Pat — or both — would wake up with sore shoulders, splitting headaches, or aching stomachs.

"I have gotten out to the village and been so sick I actually had to lie down on the ground," Pat says.

Sometimes they would lie inside their home, a former Islamic school, fighting a paralyzing exhaustion that pressed down upon them like the fever heat of Senegal.

Other times, mechanical problems would cripple their truck's engine during the drive to the village. If they turned back for home, the engine would begin running smoothly. If they wheeled around in the direction of the village, the engine problems would start again.

They wrote it all off as coincidence for a while, until it became obvious spiritual forces were at work. "We don't believe there's a demon under every tree," Elliott stresses, "but on Tuesdays it was just not natural. We realized this was an attack of the evil one."

That realization, along with God's power over darkness and the prayers of Southern Baptists, gave them new determination to persevere.

Why would the devil be so concerned about the telling of some Bible stories in a tiny Wolof village? Maybe because the village chief invited the Nicholoses to tell the stories with his blessing, in the courtyard of his own compound.

Maybe because superstition, fear, and darkness have permeated the area for millennia.

Maybe because the Wolof are the dominant people in the region.

Up to five million Wolof live in

Senegal and Gambia. They are proud, assertive and overwhelmingly Muslim. Fewer than 100 Wolof believers follow Jesus as Lord.

Even on days when Elliott and Pat shared the stories in the chief's bustling courtyard with no apparent problems, it often seemed no one was listening, much less learning the stories to share with other Wolof.

Villagers came one week and asked lots of questions, then disappeared for weeks after. Children ran around laughing and playing. "Some days I was thinking, 'Why do we even bother?'" Elliott admits.

One day during a review of key stories, a Wolof man made several mistakes as he recounted names and events. No surprise there.

"(I)n every detail that wasn't correct, the women would correct him as he was telling the stories," Elliott says. "I was fighting back tears. All the time I'd been saying, 'It's not worth it. They're not listening,' but they were listening. That was one of the greatest moments."

An even greater moment came when they finally finished telling the stories and showed the JESUS film to the whole village.

Some villagers sat silently at the end of the film. Others wept. The chief, who was walking with a cane after suffering a stroke, stood up and hobbled over to Elliott and Pat.

"Today is the best day in my life and in the life of my people," he told them, his eyes shining.

No one in the village has yet publicly followed Jesus but it will happen soon, Elliott and Pat believe. "It's God's timing," Pat says. "We just keep plugging away."

That was the climax of their first mis-



TO MINISTER — Elliott and Pat Nichols walk through a village in Senegal. The couple serve as International Mission Board missionaries to West Africa's Wolof people. More than 2.8 million Wolof live in West Africa; 95% follow Islam. (IMB photo)

sionary term. They will build on it during their second, telling God's stories and trusting Him to draw new believers and extend His Word among the Wolof.

Despite their desire to share, however, they didn't go to Senegal to tell the Wolof about the Gospel. They'd never even been on a volunteer mission trip before they became missionaries. They didn't go there to lead the Southern Baptist missionary team assigned to the Wolof, though they do so effectively.

Nor did they go because they are African-American, though that has opened many doors for them into African culture and Wolof families.

Elliott and Pat went to Senegal in 2001 for one reason: to obey God. "I'm here because this is the place God has called me to be," Pat explains about her presence in West Africa, one of the toughest regions for missionaries. "I can think of a lot of places I'd like to be, but you have to be obedient to the call God has placed on you, and God has a place for all of us."

Elliott, now 50, agrees but it took him awhile to come around.

Pat sensed God's call while serving as Baptist Young Women's director at their church in Anchorage, Alaska. Elliott had a good job and great prospects, however. He couldn't see giving it up for missionary service, particularly while they were raising their two children.

He was walking down the hall one day at work when God spoke to him. Elliott recalls: "The Lord said, 'Do you trust Me? If you trust Me, then do it.' I came home and told Pat, 'Pack the clothes; we're leaving.'"

It took 12 years to reach the mission field. They went back to school, then to seminary in New Orleans. Elliott served as a pastor for several years. Their children, meanwhile, reached adulthood.

After they were appointed mission-

aries, many more challenges awaited them in Senegal. Learning the Wolof language. Getting used to the heat. Coping with the expectations of Wolof people, who assumed the African-American couple would automatically understand their culture since they share the same skin color. Fending off spiritual attacks.

Has their journey been worth it? Ask the many Wolof women Pat now calls her "girlfriends," women who know she cares about their struggles and dreams.

"There have been a lot of 'hallelujah' moments," Pat says. "Like the day I was out with the ladies and we were sitting underneath a tree on a mat, just talking, and I realized this is why I am here... This is the season in my life where God wants me to be."

Ask the residents of that Wolof village, who welcomed back Elliott and Pat with hot tea and celebration when they returned to Senegal earlier this year.

"The light is back!" exulted the village's singer/dancer in a spontaneous performance.

The chief's 100-year-old mother, a tribal medicine woman, smiled broadly and declared: "My children have come home."

The women and girls crowded around Pat. One friend gripped her hand tightly during the visit. The men and boys circled Elliott, laughing and talking.

The chief's watery eyes shone, though he was so weak from illness he couldn't rise or speak above a whisper. Elliott knelt beside him, touched his hand and prayed for his healing, prayed that he might have the opportunity in this life to trust Jesus as Lord.

The chief nodded, closing his eyes. A ray of sunlight pierced the shadows of his room, illuminating the sunken folds of his face.

He looked content.

Tell me the story of Jesus

What would you give so she can hear?

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

Our Goal

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS



1. Harvest Festival, Sturgis Church, Sturgis



2. Moore Recognized, New Prospect Church, Leake County



3. Perfect Attendance, New Hope Church, Foxworth



4. Christmas Box Collection, Center Terrace Church, Canton

1. Sturgis Church, Sturgis, held a Harvest Festival Oct. 29. Shown are the participants.

2. New Prospect Church, Leake County, recently recognized Vera Moore for 46 years of service as church clerk and treasurer with a plaque and flowers. Shown are Moore and Willie Bishop, pastor.

3. New Hope Church, Foxworth, recently recognized those with perfect attendance in Sunday School the past church year: B.B. Stringer, 51 years; pastor Tim Parker; Jimmy Thomas, 37 years; Nancy Thomas, 22 years; Dillon Smith, 2 years; Sherrell Magee, 25 years; Anna Claire Rowell, 1 year; Howard Bennett, 1 year; Chase Clark, 10 years; Shelia Stringer, 1 year; and Samantha Graves, 1 year.

4. Center Terrace Church, Canton, recently collected 107 Christmas boxes for Operation Christmas Child. Shown are Jennie Sullivan and Susie Lambert. Danny Berry, pastor.

5. Calvary Church, Forest, ordained H.P. Foster as deacon Sept. 9. Shown are Foster, Charlene Foster, and pastor Rusty Walton.

6. Calvary Church, Smithdale and New Zion Church, Liberty, ordained Gerald Wicker to the gospel ministry Nov. 26. Shown are David Luce, Wicker, and Maurice Wicker.

7. The WMU of Hebron Church, Smithdale, packed 60 Christmas shoe boxes for Samaritan's Purse Nov. 7. Shown are Howard Conner, Dianne Wallace, Mary Conner, Phyllis Alford, Wilda Butler, Jeannine Dixon, and Maude Parker.

8. First Church, Jackson, is sponsoring GriefShare, a weekly seminar/support group for people grieving the death of someone close. It will be held on Sundays, 5-7 p.m., Jan. 21-May 27. For information, call (601) 949-1907.



5. Deacon Ordination, Calvary Church, Forest



6. Deacon Ordinations, Calvary Church, Smithdale, and New Zion Church, Liberty



7. wMu, Hebron Church, Smithdale



Hill and wife

Roundaway Church, Doddsville, welcomed their new pastor, Bob Hill, and his wife Hilda with a housewarming at the parsonage Nov. 19. Shown are the Hills.



THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Mississippi Baptist Foundation, P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205 or call 800-748-1652 or 601-292-3210.

"Look At All My Sticks"

One Saturday afternoon a few years ago, I sought to supervise my three children in a little yard work. The first task was to pick up all the sticks in the



By Daniel Hall
Executive Director
MBF

back yard prior to mowing the lawn. The presence of several pecan trees afforded us the



opportunity to pick up sticks on a regular basis. In order to provide an adequate picture of our workday, I must mention that kids (perhaps Hall kids specifically) often compare the amount of work that they are accomplishing with the amount of work that someone else is accomplishing.

Everyone approached the task in earnest. Invariably, however, my kids began comparing their efforts with the efforts of their siblings. Alyssa (then 5 1/2 years old) was picking up a few small sticks here-and-there, while Dan and Drew were striving to pick up the "biggest and most" sticks. Having noticed Alyssa's progress, Drew stopped working and declared matter-of-factly, "Alyssa, you can pick up more than one or two sticks at a time!" His observation and brotherly chastisement didn't seem to faze

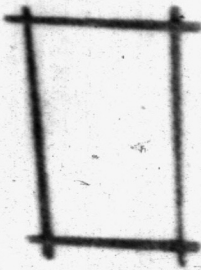
Alyssa to any great extent. Rather than rebutting his challenge, she simply said, "I'll break these sticks and then I'll have more." After breaking the few small sticks she already had gathered, she hollered, "Look at all my sticks, Daddy!"

As I reflect on that stick-gathering campaign with my children, I am reminded of Jesus' instructions to "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" rather than on

earth, since "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." My young daughter was doing her part to accomplish the task assigned to her by her father.

In my role as Executive Director of the Mississippi Baptist Foundation, I have had the unique and wonderful privilege of meeting scores of Mississippi Baptists whose pattern of Christian stewardship encompasses every aspect of life. These folks encourage me personally as they promote Kingdom ministries with their time, talents, and other resources. As such, they are storing up heavenly treasures through the sticks that are available to them while on earth. This MBF newsletter outlines several important "sticks" that are available to assist Christians accomplish their estate and stewardship goals while preparing for the future with a heavenly focus.

Last Will and Testament: An Overlooked Stick



ne very important stick for storing up heavenly treasures is a Last Will and Testament. In a nutshell, a Will is a legal document that "speaks" for you after the Lord has called you heavenward into higher service with Him. Not only does this document provide an individual the opportunity to present his or her wishes, or will, with respect to the disposition of their possessions such as guardians, families, children, and charitable giving also may be addressed.

Unfortunately, however, many people die without a valid Last Will and Testament. Some estimates suggest that 70% of the more than two million Americans who die annually do not have a Will. In other words, these individuals failed to get their "ducks in a row" regarding their estate plans and philanthropic interests.

When a person dies without a valid Last Will and Testament, emotional distress and unnecessary expense are among the host of painful consequences experi-



enced by loved ones. In addition, personal possessions may be subject to distribution according to impersonal laws and statutes. On the other hand, however, the establishment of a Will has several advantages. This document permits us to:

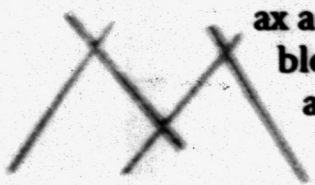
- Control our lifetime accumulation of personal property by passing these assets to family friends, charity, and ministry;
- Faithfully carry out our responsibility to care for our surviving spouse, parents,

young children, disadvantaged children, adult children, and/or grandchildren;

- Minimize estate taxes and other final costs;
- Make specific bequests of tangible property and provide for the disposition of the remaining assets after all expenses and bequests have been paid;
- Provide a tangible witness of our faith in Christ and share hope with others through gifts that support our favorite ministries in perpetuity.

Since 1943, the Mississippi Baptist Foundation has assisted individuals with charitable estate planning. If you need to get your "ducks in a row" by protecting your loved ones and including a charitable component in your Last Will and Testament, please call the Foundation office at (601) 292-3210. **Remember, when you need a will, it is too late to write a will.**

Charitable Endowment Trust: A Stick for Outright Gifts



Max and Susan Draughn of Madison recognized the blessings of setting up an endowment through an outright gift to the Mississippi Baptist Foundation. Like many young couples today, the Draughns are busy. "My husband and I wanted to make an endowment gift to our church's preschool ministry, but we also knew we didn't have the time to deal with managing the investment on a day to day basis. That's where the Baptist Foundation came in," said Susan. "With three young boys, we don't have lots of free time. Having the professional planned giving services from the Baptist Foundation was just what we needed," she added.

Susan and Max wanted to make a difference in the lives of the children at Broadmoor Baptist Church in Madison. "As an accountant, I was comfortable with the people at the Baptist Foundation. I knew what their investment strategies were and that they would stay true to them," said Susan.

Because the Draughns were pleased with the work and ministry of the MBF, they established an additional trust in memory of Max's mother. Concerning their experience with the Foundation, Max and Susan stated, "We're happy with the performance of our investments and we have a good relationship with the good people at the Foundation."

The "stick" of a charitable endowment has afforded hundreds of individuals the opportunity to store up heavenly treasures through the Mississippi Baptist Foundation. In addition to naming specific Baptist causes as beneficiaries of the




Max, Susan, Case, Owen, and Stephen Draughn

endowment's earnings, many of these gifts have been offered as a memorial to a deceased family member.

Baptist causes that could benefit from an endowed trust include the Baptist Children's Village, Baptist Colleges, the Cooperative Program, local churches or associations of churches, Southern Baptist mission boards, Women's Missionary Union, and Southern Baptist seminaries. The Foundation oversees numerous trust funds that provide scholarships for students attending a Mississippi Baptist college or Southern Baptist seminary. Please contact the Foundation for more information about establishing an endowment.

Charitable Remainder Trusts: A Stick for Life-income

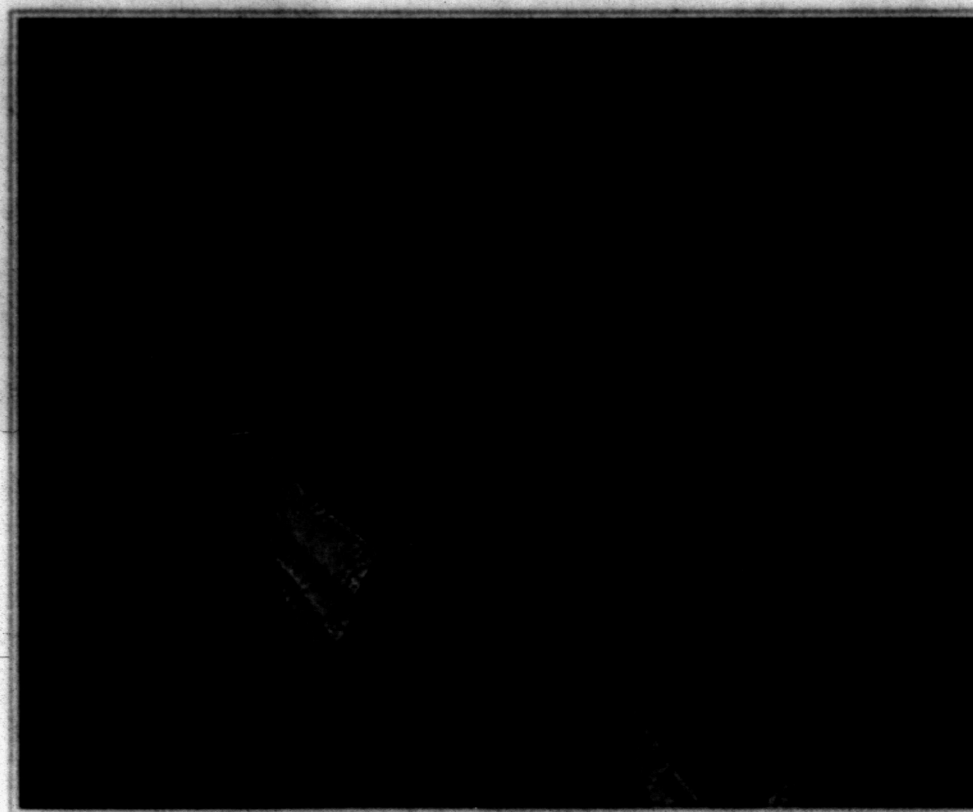
olton and Martha Haggan invested themselves in promoting the cause of Christ as Southern Baptist missionaries and through other Baptist ministries.

Martha served as a missionary nurse to Indonesia for many years. After they were married, the Haggans had a lengthy and enriching ministry with the Choctaw Indians in Neshoba County. Later, Dolton served as a pastor to several churches in Copiah County. All the while, the Haggans remained true to the biblical mandate to "make disciples."

In 2002 Martha and Dolton contacted the Foundation to learn of ways in which they could continue to answer the call to missions as faithful stewards of God's provisions. They learned how a Charitable Remainder Trust could serve as another "stick" for storing up treasures in heaven. Thus, they established the "Dolton and Martha Haggan Charitable Remainder Unitrust."

Several specific benefits and blessings resulted from the Haggans' exercise in Christian stewardship. First, they received the benefit of a tax deduction for their charitable contribution. Second, by establishing a charitable remainder trust, the Haggans became eligible for an income stream for life. When the Lord called Dolton to his heavenly home earlier this year, Martha received comfort and encouragement from the fact that the "Dolton and Martha Haggan Charitable Remainder Trust" would continue to offer a source of income for her in the years ahead.

Third, the Haggans received the joy of knowing that the stewardship of their resources would reap eternal dividends through the host of Baptist causes presented as beneficiaries of the trust's residual assets. Having invested themselves in



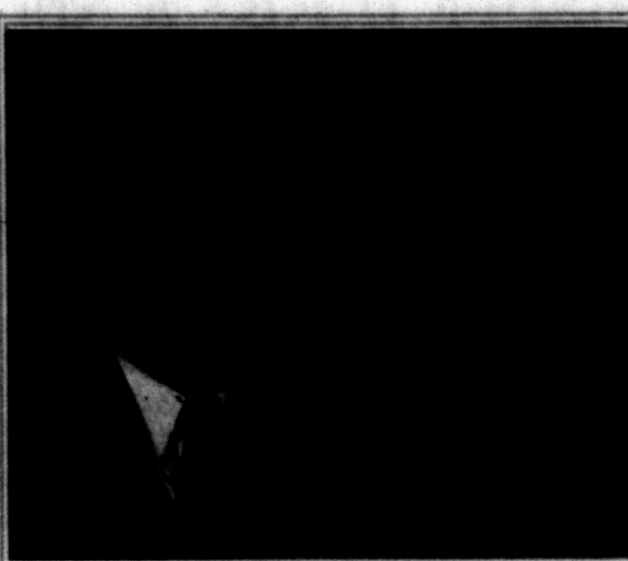
Dolton and Martha Haggan

Southern Baptist missions throughout their lives, Dolton and Martha named the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board as beneficiaries. Both the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions were designated. In addition, the Haggans emphasized mission endeavors through the work of Mississippi Baptists by naming the Margaret Lackey Mission Offering for State Missions as a third beneficiary.

Numerous stewards have established a charitable remainder trust with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation as part of their overall estate and stewardship plan. As you think about preparing for the future, please contact the Mississippi Baptist Foundation for more information about incorporating a Charitable Remainder Unitrust (CRUT), a Charitable Remainder Annuity Trust (CRAT), or a Charitable Lead Trust as a "stick" for storing up treasures in heaven.

Charitable Gift Annuity: A Stick for Tax-free Income

hundreds of varieties of daylilies grow around the white picket fence in the yard of Berneda Wilkinson. This beautiful yard affords passers-by only a quick glimpse of the influence of Berneda and her late husband Michael. The Wilkinsons planted eternal seeds through a Charitable Gift Annuity established with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation. Like the daylilies, this planting will continue to bloom and prosper, while presenting a beautiful portrait of Christian stewardship for years to come.



Michael and Berneda Wilkinson

Record, he "decided to call the Foundation to find out more." Because Michael "was always a bit uncomfortable being in the stock market," he contributed his stocks to the Foundation in order to create a Charitable Gift Annuity for Berneda. Recognizing the resultant blessings from employing a Charitable Gift Annuity as a unique "stick" for storing up treasures, Michael stated, "It gives her income for life (a portion of which is tax-free), I received a tax deduction, and we named Baptist

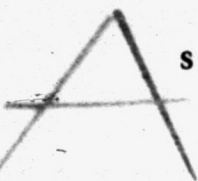
Michael and Berneda Wilkinson first contacted the Foundation in 1999. Although Michael indicated that he "had always known about the Foundation" through reading about it in the Baptist

Health Systems as the beneficiary of the funds after we're gone." Although Michael entered eternal glory in August of this year, Berneda continues to receive a regular income stream created through an earlier act of Christian stewardship.

BENEFITS OF A CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY (\$10,000)

Age	Gift Amount	Rate	Guaranteed Annual Income	Tax-Free Income	Taxable Income	Charitable Deduction
60	\$10,000	5.7%	\$570	\$261.63	\$308.37	\$3,691.10
65	\$10,000	6.0%	\$600	\$299.40	\$300.60	\$4,041.50
70	\$10,000	6.5%	\$650	\$354.90	\$295.10	\$4,353.10
75	\$10,000	7.10%	\$710	\$423.16	\$286.84	\$4,749.20
80	\$10,000	8.00%	\$800	\$516.00	\$284.00	\$5,147.40
85	\$10,000	9.5%	\$950	\$670.70	\$279.30	\$5,439.60
90	\$10,000	11.3%	\$1,130	\$845.24	\$284.76	\$5,859.40

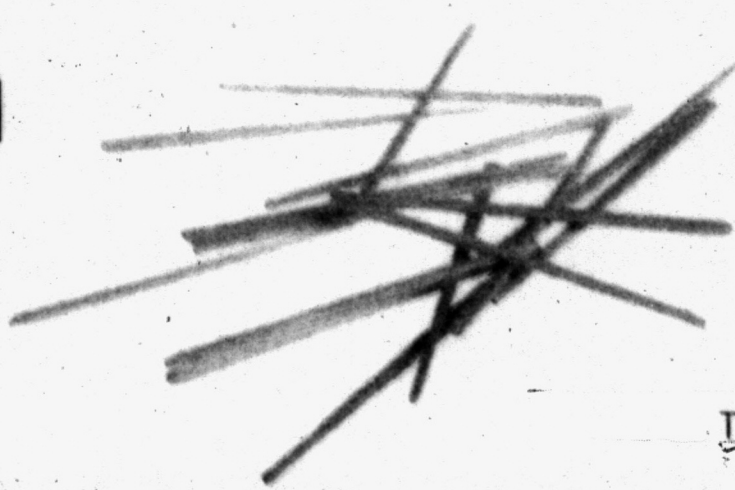
*These figures are for illustrative purposes only and should not be construed as tax or financial advice. The \$10,000 figure is merely an example. We would be glad to provide additional illustrations based upon your specific age and annuity amount. Calculations for two lives are also available upon request.



As a father, I strive to teach my three children the joys and benefits of work.

Additionally, my goal is to provide instruction and opportunities for my kids to grow in the "grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." Hopefully, my efforts will be met with success.

While watching, assisting, and supervising these young lives, I realized that those individuals who stand before the Lord one day, having lived the Christian life abundantly and completely, will be able to say, "Daddy, look at all my sticks" to which will come the ultimate response, "Well done thou good and faithful servant!"



MBF

THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION

JUST FOR THE RECORD



9. Margaret Lackey Offering, Heritage Heights Church, Laurel



10. GA Recognition Service, Dry Creek Church, Simpson County



11. Homecoming, First Church, Potts Camp



12. Mission Trips, Trinity Church, Rankin County

9. **Heritage Heights Church, Laurel**, "roofed" a model church in keeping with the theme Restoring Mississippi. Each shingle represented money given to the Margaret Lackey State Missions offering. The church exceeded its goal of \$3,000. Shown are pastor Ken Regan, Peggy Wolgamott and Donald Sabella.

10. **Dry Creek Church, Magee**, recently held a GA/Acteen recognition service. Shown are the participants.

11. **First Church, Potts Camp**, held its homecoming Oct. 29, with preaching by former pastors. Shown are Ken Cooper, Jim Buchanan, Charles Fowler, and Joe Epting.

12. A group from **Trinity Church, Rankin County**, has made two mission trips to the Freedom Christian Fellowship Church, Moss Point, to help with rebuilding from Katrina damage. Shown are the participants.

13. **Hope Church, Neshoba Association**, ordained Wade Bobo as deacon Sept. 3. Shown are pastor Dennis Duvall, right, and Bobo.

14. **Pearl River Association** burned the note on their property seven years early on April 13. Shown are Andy Anderson, Linda Alexander, Mable Smith, Pat Spence, Ken Rhodes, Connie Ladner, Evelyn Lee, Carl Myers, and Leroy Gilbert.

15. **West Union Church, Carriere**, celebrated its 100th anniversary Oct. 1. The event had been postponed for a year due to Hurricane Katrina. Shown are Carl Myers, Pearl River Association AMD and pastor Bud Putnam.

16. **Tate Church, Corinth**, honored their pastor, Gregg Thomas, during a special Pastor Appreciation time on the church's high attendance day. He received several gifts from the deacons and the church family.

17. **Kreole Ave. Church, Moss Point**, will present its cantata Arise, Shine Dec. 17, 6 p.m. Don Womble, pastor; Tammy Howard, music director.

18. **Damascus Church, Flora**, will present a Christmas musical, There's Something About That Name Dec. 17, 6 p.m., followed by a reception. Sonny Bradshaw, pastor; Brenda Quattlebaum, minister of music.



13. Deacon Ordination, Hope Church, Neshoba Association



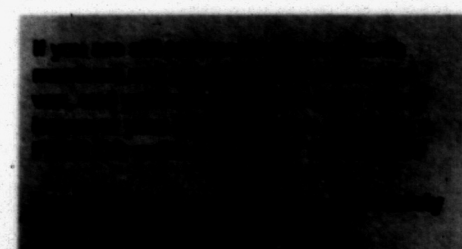
14. Noteburning, Pearl River Association



15. 100th Anniversary, West Union Church, Carriere

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Missionaries seek out 'forsaken of God'

Bibliocipher

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QCNHNPEHN GM UHND-
CHNZ, MN TSFE THN
UNWEGN VNTV DE DCN
STQ UM DCN UEVM EP
WCHAFD; DCTD MN
FCEOSV UN GTHHANV DE
TZEDCNH, NLNZ DE CAG
QCE AF HTAFNV PHEG
DCN VNTV, DCTD QN
FCEOSV UHAZY PEHDC
PHOAD OZDE YEV.

HEGTZF FNLNZ: PEOH

Clue: M = Y

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark Ten: Forty-Five.

NIGER, West Africa — In Niger's desert sands the Tuareg people still live in the nomadic lifestyle of their ancestors, still survive where water and food are increasingly scarce, and still practice the Islamic faith passed down to them.

The name Tuareg means "the forsaken of God," but Tuareg now search for hope as their way of life is progressively threatened each day.

The Tuareg have long lived off the land they don't own, possessing the land only as long as they live on it. Years of drought have killed their animals and left them wondering how much longer they can survive without seeking jobs in the city.

"The way of life that is historically (Tuareg) doesn't look like it will exist another decade," says Warren Hessling, who along with his wife Sharon serve as strategy coordinators for the Tuareg people.

Sharon recalls how a woman in a Tuareg village said she feared her family would "die out here like camels" if they didn't get more food. Many Tuareg have already journeyed to cities to find work, but their shepherding trade doesn't translate into city life. Their city jobs usually are guardians for other people's homes.

Warren estimates roughly 10% of city Tuareg are actually employed, adding to their burden of taking care of the extend-

ed family. Even in the city, Tuareg remain nomadic, moving about every two years but never owning the land. They remain largely poor.

"They live in empty areas of the city, so as soon as a building moves into that area, they have to move out, because they don't own any property," Hessling says.

The Tuareg's pride in heritage is not lost among those moving into the city, especially among older ones who hang tightly to the one thing they believe can last: their Islamic faith. However, younger city-dwelling Tuareg don't share the heritage of their ancestors, allowing an open door for the Gospel.

"The family themselves persecute that person," Hessling says of young Tuareg interested in other faiths. "They drive them off. They beat them. They won't give them food."

Tuareg rely heavily on their family to support them through tough times, especially in the city where loss of job could mean loss of life without family support.



ONE ON ONE — Missionary Warren Hessling shares with a young Tuareg man in Niamey, Niger. As an International Mission Board strategy coordinator, Warren is responsible for helping direct work to bring the Gospel to the Tuareg. The name Tuareg means "the forsaken of God." There are fewer than 200 known Christian believers among the 1.4 million Tuareg people. (IMB photo)

Hessling notes one 50-year-old man in the city who consequently demands great respect.

"I've had a couple of young men who are interested (in the Gospel)," Hessling says, "but they call him 'uncle' or 'great uncle' and cannot come here to study the Bible with me because they fear him."

Sharon notes that while some Tuareg men show interest in studying the Bible, women have less interest.

"Women are fairly resistant. Also, they always have young children and they're cooking or taking care of the children," she says. "There are constant interruptions as far as getting into deep one-on-one discussions."

Sharon adds, "A lot of the groundwork has to be laid. An average Muslim believer takes five to eight years to become a Christian from when they first come in contact with a Christian, because it is so completely foreign to them."

The Hesslings hope a strategy called Sahel Hope will help Tuareg

hear the true message of Jesus Christ. The plan pairs volunteer missionary skills with job training needs for Tuareg. A consistent barrier to Tuareg coming to Christ has been fear of being separated from their families and consequently from financial support.

"We can't plant self-sustaining churches if 80% of the people in the church are going to be unemployed," Sharon says.

The Hesslings have requested 12 student volunteers to spend three months in Niamey, Niger, tutoring children, but volunteers from America are not the only ones the Hesslings are calling on to help take God's Word to the Tuareg. Hessling says he will soon make a trip to a neighboring country to speak to believers there about making a trip to Niger to share their faith with the Tuareg.

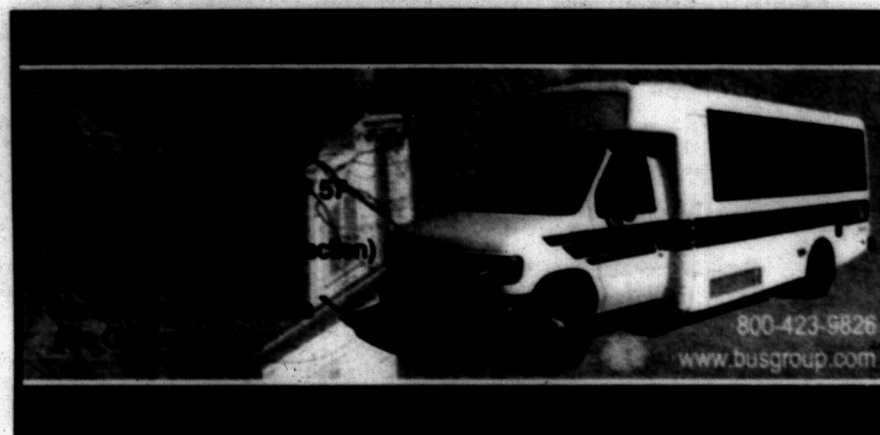
Ultimately, however, the Hesslings dream of a time when no outside help will be needed to take the Gospel message to all Tuareg.

Perhaps that dream is not so far off. In one village, a new believer is known by the name Paul for the boldness with which he shares his faith.

"His testimony is a tough one but he is trusting in God," Hessling says. "He says 'just patience, patience will win out.'"



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS — International Mission Board missionary Sharon Hessling (left) talks with a group of Tuareg women in Niamey, Niger. Most Tuareg follow Islam, though many hold onto animistic beliefs as well. (IMB photo)



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LOOKING AHEAD ... 2007



By Jimmy Porter

The curtain is going to close on 2006 and "Father Time" will hand to each of us a brand new year. Each day will be fresh, untainted, and filled with wonderful opportunities to fulfill our life's purpose.

Be assured that 2007 will not be like 2006. Some of the differences will be good and some will not. This

past November Congress changed drastically and it will profoundly impact many areas of our culture.

Dr. Richard Land, Executive Editor of "Faith and Family Values," stated during a panel discussion at the Values Voter Summit, September 23, 2006 that "God is pro-life, pro-heterosexual, and anti-pornography." Look for attempts to be made by the national leadership of the controlling party in the House and the Senate to soften the American public's stance on these important issues.

These impending possibilities, along with the Presidential election of 2008, will make 2007 a very pivotal and critical year for the Christian community. It is vital that we become more aware of the issues that are before us. Those who support abortion and homosexual marriages and rights will intensify their efforts.

As for Mississippi, she will be dominated by the election process. The Christian Action Commission encourages you to get involved, learn who the can-

didates are and become familiar with their views on the critical issues.

There are two areas that will be hotly debated, not only next year but for years to come. One is the issue of homosexuality and their rights. You need to know that there are groups who work daily to help those who desire to break the bonds of unwanted same-sex attraction. For example, on January 25, 2007, the Hinds Community College Baptist Student Union will be sponsoring an educational conference entitled, "Facing Homosexuality in Our Day." The speaker will be John Smid, President of Love in Action in Memphis, Tenn. Not only will the BSU host this conference, but as a part of this meeting they will offer a confidential weekly support group for those who wish to live a life of sexual and relational purity. For further information call (601) 925-6435. It is easy to condemn a lifestyle but it takes prayer and effort to assist those who want to change, so pray for this BSU sponsored group.

Secondly, in 2007 and beyond the battle between pro and anti-abortion forces will intensify. So often we see it as a battle and lose sight of the babies whose lives never came to be due to the tragic ruling of the Supreme Court in *Roe vs. Wade*.

You should now be aware that the Mississippi Baptist Convention and the Christian Action Commission have been and are in the process of creating a memorial to the 50 million aborted babies

since that court ruling. Many of you have generously given of your pennies, but we are not there yet.

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in its meeting last week graciously granted permission for us to ask our churches to receive a one-time offering to purchase pennies to fill our glass memorial. On January 5th all our churches will be mailed bulletin inserts and envelopes for this offering. January 21, 2007 is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, and this is the suggested time for the offering, but whenever you do it will be appreciated.

The Memorial to the Missing has already made a tremendous impact on several individuals. When it is filled it will be an even greater witness to the reality of abortion. The most positive impact of this memorial is when the pennies are later invested in a trust with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation. The proceeds from this investment each year will be given to centers and groups that stand on the front lines fighting for the rights of the unborn.

I hope you will help us go over the top with this special Sanctity of Human Life Offering.

Rita, Lee and I thank you for your support, prayers and participation this past year. We wish for you all the Hope, Joy, and Peace this Christmas can bring to you and your family.

Jimmy Porter is executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission.

Couple tries novel approach to reach lost

NIGERIA, West Africa — David is intrigued by big ideas and how to make them work. Until his junior year in college, his plan was to explore a moon-scape or two. He was studying to become an astronaut.

As things sometimes happen, across that career path walked a guy with Campus Crusade for Christ. As the two discussed what God might have in store for David's life, the Crusade staffer suggested the engineering degree also could be put to good use on a remote part of this planet. It was an idea that interested David.

"A year later, I was seriously considering it," he says.

As he broached the idea with Rachel, the young nursing student in his life, she agreed and they began to explore the possibility of serving in a faraway place, perhaps Indonesia or Africa.

"My call to missions was at age 11 or 12 at Girls in Action camp," she explains. "When I learned there were people in the world who did not know Jesus, I told God, 'I am willing to go where you ask me to go, and be whatever you want me to be.'"

Separately, God began nudging David and Rachel toward Africa.

As recent graduates and newlyweds, they answered the call to Nairobi, Kenya. Headquartered there in the mid-1980s, David traveled extensively for Campus Crusade to provide computer training and systems for nationals and missionaries.

Together, they helped start a

church, and David disciplined a group of young men who are now pastors or Bible study leaders.

They saw how fast the Gospel could spread. Instead of growing by simple addition, the increase through church planting/disciple-making could be exponential. Since Campus Crusade was not starting churches, the couple began to look for opportunities through the International Mission Board.

Today, David is picking up his fourth language, Hausa, as the couple settles down in their newest assignment in a fast-growing community in Nigeria.

"I admire them because they are trail-blazers," says Mike Stonecypher, IMB liaison with the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

At nearly 30 million total, the Hausa live in 16 different African countries. About 18-20 million are in Nigeria. The Hausa constitute the largest unreached people group in West Africa. They also represent one of the largest blocs of Islam in Africa and the world.

Because of their population size, strong trade, business and relational skills, they exercise both political and religious clout throughout Africa.

So far, Hausa Muslims have aggressively moved into this region to convert those within the local ethnic groups. As this happens, the indigenous people are often absorbed, losing their traditional religion, cultural identity and language.

Hausa, which borrows heavily from Arabic, is now the second language for many in the northern half of Nigeria, Chad, Benin, and Ghana.

"If you look at a map of Africa, and wanted to color it black where there is no knowledge of the Gospel, what stares at you from the middle of West Africa is a big hole," David says. "Missionaries have had some impact but entering this community as business professionals, we should find another level of acceptance."

The couple work as entrepreneurs while they experiment with some big ideas for church starting and discipleship in urban areas among the influential Hausa.

With multiplication in mind, David's goal is to disciple 12 men in a year. These men will then work, two-by-two, to plant six new churches. Rachel's plan is to befriend Hausa women who during child-bearing years are often secluded. Plans are for the team to disciple each new believer immediately and prepare him/her to become a trainer or equipper of other new Christians.

They will start small churches with the plan for each church to remain small (fewer than 20 adults). Men will instruct men; women will instruct women. Built around family groups, these small churches should benefit from low start-up costs, intimacy in fellowship and security in a world where that's a necessity. If the situation is secure, at times the small churches will gather for fellowship and a meal.

"In some cases, there has been intense persecution here," David says, "but we have also seen that the church can remain firm, drawing strength from its community of believers."

HARD

Using a heavy stick, a Hausa pounds grain in a mortar near Zaria. There are approximately 280,000 Hausa in Nigeria.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a Gift of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor with taste and respect those who are and have been special to our special friends.

NOV. 21 - DEC. 10, 2006

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The Homemakers SSC of Indian Springs Baptist Church of Laurel recently collected paper products and cleaning supplies for The Baptist Children's Village in memory of their friend and longtime BCV friend, Mrs. Mary Alice Miles. Pictured are Mrs. Miles sons who accompanied the ladies on a tour of The Baptist Children's Village.

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The Cadretta Water Association



Mrs. Cheryl Grubbs has been elected to serve as President of The Baptist Children's Village 2007 Board of Trustees. Mrs. Grubbs and her husband Lewis reside in Jackson and are members of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Madison. Pictured with Mrs. Grubbs is Rory Lee, BCV Executive Director.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Love That Lasts

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

By Gloria Lofton

We are continuing our study on life-changing gifts. This week we are focusing on Love That Lasts. Love is one of the most precious gifts God has given us. His is an agape love. An agape love is an unconditional love which is given to us through no merit of our own. Though so unworthy, God's love for us never changes.

Do you ever wonder how God could love you? I do, because I know how unworthy I am of such a perfect love from such a perfect God. Paul was in Ephesus when He wrote this Epistle to the Corinthian Christians. The date cannot be fixed with absolute certainty, but it seems probable that the Epistle was written during the latter part of Paul's stay at Ephesus. This would put it about A.D. 55. There had come to Paul

reports of divisions in the church. He was writing to admonish the Christians in Corinth concerning these divisions. He explained to them that they were one body in Christ, and as one body has many members, each member has its own purpose. They were to live and work together in unity and love. In 1 Corinthians 12:31b, Paul tells them he would show them a more excellent way. By a more excellent way, he was speaking of the way of agape. In Chapter 13:1, Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that if he was to speak with all eloquence, but if the words spoken did not come from the depth of a heart of love, it would be nothing. In verse 2 he goes on to say if he had the gift of prophecy, and knew all mysteries and all knowledge, and faith to remove mountains and had not love he would be nothing. Paul



Lofton

was trying to get them to understand how futile it was for them to have divisions over things that are earthly. He knew that one day these would be done away with, and the only thing left would be love. In verse 3, Paul moves from gifts to acts which seem to be expressions of love. Even the greatest act can be egoism if the spirit of self is sought. Likewise, this too will profit nothing. As we read the next text: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, we can see the life and character of Jesus Christ. Paul is telling the Christians at Corinth if they observe these truths, their divisions in the church would be solved. "Love is patient, love is kind" may be a summary statement of this section of scripture. Love is not jealous, doesn't brag, is not arrogant, doesn't act unbecomingly, doesn't not do things just for its own self, but instead stops and thinks how it will affect others. Love is not provoked and doesn't think of wrongs it has suffered; doesn't rejoice in

unrighteousness, but rejoices in truth. If we as Christians strive to match our character with Christ's, it will be much easier to love with an agape love.

In 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 the permanence of love is expounded upon. Love, unlike the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge, never fails nor ceases its activity. The reason the gifts that are mentioned will fail is because a time of perfected knowledge and prophecy is coming. At the coming of that which is perfect, which is the second coming of Jesus Christ, there will be no need for the exercise of the other gifts. How can we speak of these gifts as temporary? The following verse will answer this. "When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, reason as a child. When I became a man I did away with childish things." 1 Corinthians 13:11, (NASB). "It is extremely important to an understanding of Paul's thoughts to notice the force of the illustration he introduces at this point. The illustration is designed to show the character of the period between the two comings of Christ. With references to these particular

gifts, It may be likened to the growing up of a person from infancy to manhood. The special and spectacular gifts were necessary in early stages of the growth of the true church (cf. Eph 4:7-16) for purpose of authentication (cf. Heb. 2:3,4) and edification (1 Cor. 14:3) when there was no New Testament to give light. They were the "baby talk" of the church. As history has abundantly verified, with the Word and growing maturity, there came to be no need for such gifts." (The Wycliff Bible Commentary; page 1252).

We can praise God that the gift of love will last forever, because it is an attribute of the eternal and unchanging God. Let us as God's people do away with immature and prideful behavior. May we strive to be spiritually mature adults by showing God's never ending love to those whom we think do not deserve it. Remember, before God sought us out and brought us this endless love, we too were not deserving of such a love.

Lofton is a member of Willow Grove Church, Collins.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE Following Godly Leaders

Ezra 7:8-10; 9:1-2,4; 10:1-5

By Tim Alexander

As I prepared to write this article, I was reminded of Psalm 23:2b-3 KJV: "He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteous for his name's sake." The Lord is our leader. We, as sheep, should follow the "Good Shepherd." We first must be a follower before we can become a leader worth following.

Keep in mind, there was a great time lapse between the first six chapters in Ezra and the last three chapters. 75 to 80 years had passed as chapter 7 begins. Ezra, who the book is named after, was finally recognized as a leader. The phrase "the good hand of the Lord was upon me" appears six times in chapter 7-8. Nothing but the "hand of the

Lord" can explain how this obscure Jewish Priest born in Babylonian captivity became a distinguished scholar and leader. Ezra had a divine calling. Ezra's name means "Yahweh help." Ezra was a scribe and a priest. A scribe is a person who was trained in writing skills and used to record events or decisions. Ezra's role was vital to interpret the law to the Jews.

1. What is a Godly Leader? (Ezra 7:8-10)

When you recall Ezra was born in Babylon (near present day Baghdad, Iraq), we can have a better appreciation of him as a scholar of the Jewish Scriptures. The Lord provided Ezra with Old Testament scrolls even in the distant land of Babylon. Ezra is also com-



Alexander

mended for studying God's Word with no Jewish temple in Babylon. He was a Godly priest and teacher of the law whose passion was to lead the people to live according to God's law. Ezra's experience as a scribe prepared him for his role as priest. He not only had copied the law, he probably memorized a large portion of it as well.

One of the marks of a Godly leader today is time spent reading, meditating and memorizing God word. Ezra set the example then. It is our job today to be a Godly leader by following his example.

2. What Characterizes Ungodly Behavior (Ezra 9:1-2, 4)

Four months after Ezra's Jerusalem homecoming, he learned that 100 religious and civil leaders had deliberately disobeyed the Law that he had come to teach. Lessons learned from Ezra's difficult problem

and how he solved it can be applied to our lives. We should take seriously God's commands "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44, NKJV).

Ezra was informed that leaders of the tribes, some of the priests and Levites had married foreign wives; some men had divorced their Jewish wives to marry foreign women. These marriages were in violation of God's Law. It was legal for a Jewish man to marry a foreign woman, if she would accept her husband's faith, and renounce her old life; but this law did not apply to the women in Canaan. Deuteronomy 20:1-15 and 21:10-14 states that a Jewish soldier can marry a female prisoner of war, but he was forbidden to marry a Canaanite woman.

3. What does following Godly Leaders Include? (Ezra 10:1-5)

"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16) NIV. Our God is always faithful to those who pray. One of the most powerful resources we have is a prayer life with the Lord. I have heard

it said, "It is hard to be mad at someone you are praying for."

Ezra was not only a scholar, scribe and priest, he practiced what he preached. Chapter 10 begins with Ezra praying, confessing, and weeping, before the house of God. Soon the very large assembly of men, women and children gathered around him and wept bitterly. I would rather see a sermon than hear one any day. The contrite heart of Ezra bled with prayer and others followed. This example of prayer demonstrated the seriousness of sin and the reality of repentance and forgiveness.

Ezra is a shining example of a Godly leader. He faithfully examined the scripture, hid the scriptures in his heart and demonstrated the love of God to sinners.

Everyone leads someone. Who are you leading? Are you leading another employee, a volunteer group or maybe your children or grandchildren? Strive to lead with God's love as Ezra did.

Alexander is Minister of Education, Harrisburg Church, Tupelo.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted.



Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to crop-

ping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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Single missionary takes on huge mission challenge

NIGER, West Africa — When journeyman Danielle Koepke spent her first night in a Fulani village in Niger, West Africa, she wondered if she was ready for the experience. Surrounded by an older Fulani woman and several members of the woman's extended family, Koepke suddenly realized how little these Fulani people understood her.

"I was just struck with the fact that she had family all around," she says, "and being in a group like that, alone, being the only person that understands myself, I got really lonely."

Despite her loneliness, Koepke says she remembered Bible passages about being courageous and knew she was where she needed to be.

"The Bible talks a lot about being strong and having courage, so I was like, 'OK, I'm going to stay and stick it out and take up God's strength,' and it was great," she says. "The rest of the night, I didn't feel lonely."

At age 24, Koepke is the first missionary to bring the Gospel to the Sokoto Fulani people of West Africa, where fewer than two percent profess Christianity. "There are difficulties being the pioneer," she says.

It's true. Koepke faces the ongoing challenge of being a single female in a male-dominated, Muslim society. However, Fulani team strategy coordinator Kris Riggs hopes Koepke will gain a better understanding of Sokoto Fulani culture and build relationships with the people.

"Right now, nobody is focusing on the Sokoto Fulani, so we really have no ongoing witness," Riggs says. "For now, a big part of our strategy is just getting people out there to build relationships and begin getting the Word out."

Recognizing the need to reach the Sokoto Fulani with the Gospel, and sensing God's call to work among this people, Koepke says she immediately responded. "I read this job request and it said, 'Go out there, live among them and love the people,'" she says. "I immediately knew this job was for me."

When Koepke decided to reach the Sokoto Fulani, she had no idea her obedience to God's call had answered the prayers of Wickland Church, a small congregation in Bardstown, Ky.

After 30 days of prayer for lost people groups of the world, the Wickland members decided to participate in the International Mission Board's PrayerPlus program, a partnership allowing churches to adopt a people group of the world through prayer, plus whatever else God leads them to do.

When the congregation received the names of three unreached people groups from which to choose, they immediately began praying for guidance. After more than a month of prayer, the congregation voted to adopt the Sokoto Fulani.

"They don't have the Bible in their native language," says Joe Taylor, who served as Wickland's pastor at the time the prayer initiative began, "and so we began praying for that, praying that God would send mission-



REACHING OUT — Journeyman Danielle Koepke (right) talks with a Sokoto Fulani man in Niger, West Africa. Koepke is pioneering the effort to bring the Gospel to this primarily Muslim people group. (IMB photo)

aries to open up a dark part of the world, and that Christ would be seen through some kind of visible testimony. We can't be there ourselves, so we pray that God would raise up some individuals to do that."

The church's missions director, Patricia Stone, says she was surprised by the congregation's interest and commitment to pray for a missionary to the Sokoto Fulani.

"We prayed fervently every week on Wednesday evenings," Stone says, "and then many of us spent a lot of time in our homes praying about this, praying God would send workers into that harvest field."

Wickland members were amazed at how quickly God answered their prayers. "People saw firsthand God does answer prayer, and He doesn't do it on our time schedule," Taylor says. "We had every concept that it would be later, but God chose to work immediately."

Taylor says the immediate answer to prayer fueled the prayers of the congregation even further.

"They've been going out of their way to encourage me and pray for me," Koepke says. "We've kept in touch through e-mail since I've been here."

While Koepke has appreciated the church's prayers and encouragement, members have equally appreciated Koepke's willingness to serve.

"We're very impressed with Danielle," Stone says, "and although she is so many miles away, she's a great inspiration to us."

While Wickland church members have been encouraged by Koepke's decision to serve among the Sokoto Fulani, Koepke says she's blessed to serve. "I think it's an incredible honor," she says. "It's a really big job, but God's told me over and over that I'm not the one who has to do it, and that's a good thing."

Koepke realizes the enormity of the task ahead of her, but says she believes God was preparing the hearts of the Sokoto Fulani long before she arrived in West Africa.

"I just have faith that God's been working on these people for a long time, and it's not that I'm there to save them all, but I'm just there to be obedient and watch what God's doing among the Sokoto Fulani," she says.

Riggs also realizes the challenges Koepke will face as she continues to engage a people group with no prior access to the Gospel. He says it's difficult opening doors to villages and getting to know who's open and receptive to the Gospel.

As the first missionary to engage the Sokoto Fulani of West Africa, Koepke says she's seen God's provision in a new light. She has been open to a whole new dimension of God's sustenance and how much He provides for her. She also has experienced a deep sense of satisfaction in her work.

"God's given me a desire for learning cultures and loving people," Koepke says. "I can't get over how satisfied I am when I get to sit and talk to people and share God's love with them."

Churches can have impact on missions, regardless of size

BARDSTOWN, Ky. — The praying members of Wickland Church in Bardstown, Ky., are proving that small churches can impact the nations. The congregation, with an average worship attendance of 65, prayerfully chose to adopt the Sokoto Fulani unreached people group of Niger, West Africa.

Now they praise God for providing nine individuals to share the love of Jesus Christ among the Sokoto Fulani people.

"It boils down to the hope that every living, breathing Sokoto Fulani... will hear the message of Jesus and know eternal life through Him," says Pat Stone, the church's missions director.

Shortly after Wickland members began praying for the Sokoto Fulani, the Lord called 23-year-old Danielle Koepke to go live with and love the

people as a two-year journeyman missionary.

"Talk about it being real exciting for us and encouraging for our prayers," says Dave Coffing, a member of Wickland's missions committee. "That just encouraged us to continue praying."

Now other churches work with the International Mission Board (IMB) to help bring the Gospel to this people group, and Wickland hopes to send church members to Niger within the year.

"It's a little frustrating, not being able to go (right now), but... you have to wait for God's timing," Coffing says.

After praying for lost people groups of the world, Wickland members decided to participate in the IMB's PrayerPlus program, a partnership allowing churches to adopt people groups through prayer.

When the congregation received the names of three unreached people groups from which to choose, they immediately began praying for guidance. After more than a month of prayer, the congregation voted to adopt the Sokoto Fulani.

"We're just a few people doing some fairly dedicated prayer," Coffing says. "We just try to join in on what God's doing."

"This is all a part of the plan God has for the church," says Ron Hill, IMB's West Africa regional personalizer. "It's not, 'Should we do this?' or 'Does God want us to do this?' but it's more a question of, 'Where does God want us to work, and with whom?'"

After churches have prayerfully determined what part of the world to lift up in prayer, they can contact specific regional personalizers to learn of overseas prayer needs.

Before jumping into people-group adoption, Hill suggests churches ask themselves two basic questions:

- What people group does God want us to impact?
- What strategies or ministries does God want us to use to impact this people group?

As Wickland has displayed, church size plays no factor.

"A church of any size can have an impact," Hill says. "They can't do it all, but they can share their passion with other churches and bring them together in a network to make an impact."

"If we have churches willing to step up and play the role of carrying the Gospel to those who have yet to hear it, we could see the Gospel being carried to all... people groups in our generation."

"To me, that is awesome."

Record

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This edition of *The Baptist Record* will be the final issue of 2006. The next issue will be dated January 4, 2007.

The staff of *The Baptist Record* thanks you for your continued support of this special ministry of information, and wishes for you and your loved ones a blessed celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and a Happy New Year!

YEC 2006 offers cutting edge message

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

The 2006 Youth Evangelism Challenge (YEC), sponsored by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), will be held Dec. 28-29 at the A.E. Wood Coliseum on the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton.

What sets this event apart from other youth events is the intentional use of innovative messages and music, coupled with meaningful breakout sessions.

"This time of challenge is designed to meet three distinct areas of need in the lives of students," said Harvey Ellis, MBCB youth ministry specialist. "First, we want students to encounter Christ for the first time. Second, we want to challenge students in their walk with Christ. We want them to ask questions such as 'Where am I in my walk with Christ today? How is this affecting me? How is this affecting my family, friends, and others with whom I have contact?' And finally, we want them to know that God loves them deeply, and has wonderful plans for their lives. It is their privilege to get to know Him and understand His plans for them."

One special feature of this year's event is the use of Christian illusionist, Brock Gill. "We've used big-name speakers before," said Ellis, "but Brock is also a communicator. He's a great speaker, and his major focus is evangelism, but he uses illusions to communicate."

Gill leads a new generation of edgy, daring illusionists, amazing audiences with his unique stage show, dry wit, and mind-blowing escapes. While working at a sawmill in 1997, Gill felt that God wanted him to use illusions, escapes, and stunts to bring a message of hope to people. With a passion of reaching people as a catalyst, Gill went back to college and began performing at church outreach events.

News of his creative method of evangelism spread throughout the area quickly. Since then, God has taken Gill's ministry across the United States, Mexico, and Australia, and his heart for the lost has grown. Understanding that students in the MTV generation have short attention spans and need to be entertained visually, he has learned how to get an audience's attention quickly and keep it.

Worship will be led by the husband and wife team of Daniel and Bonnie Hoover. "This couple is passionate about leading worship," said Ellis. "Beyond just leading worship, though, they love to teach and

train others how to go back to their churches and lead worship themselves."

The couple are founders of WorshipOne, and have led worship on the road and consulted with student bands since June of 1997. They are also directors of student arts at NorthStar Church in north Atlanta. There, they invest in the lives of junior high and high school students by leading and discipling three student bands and working alongside the drama and technical teams.

"The majority of the time is designed for students to be able to go back home, to their schools and neighborhoods, and be intentional about being evangelistic," said Ellis. To that end, breakout groups are a crucial part of the event.

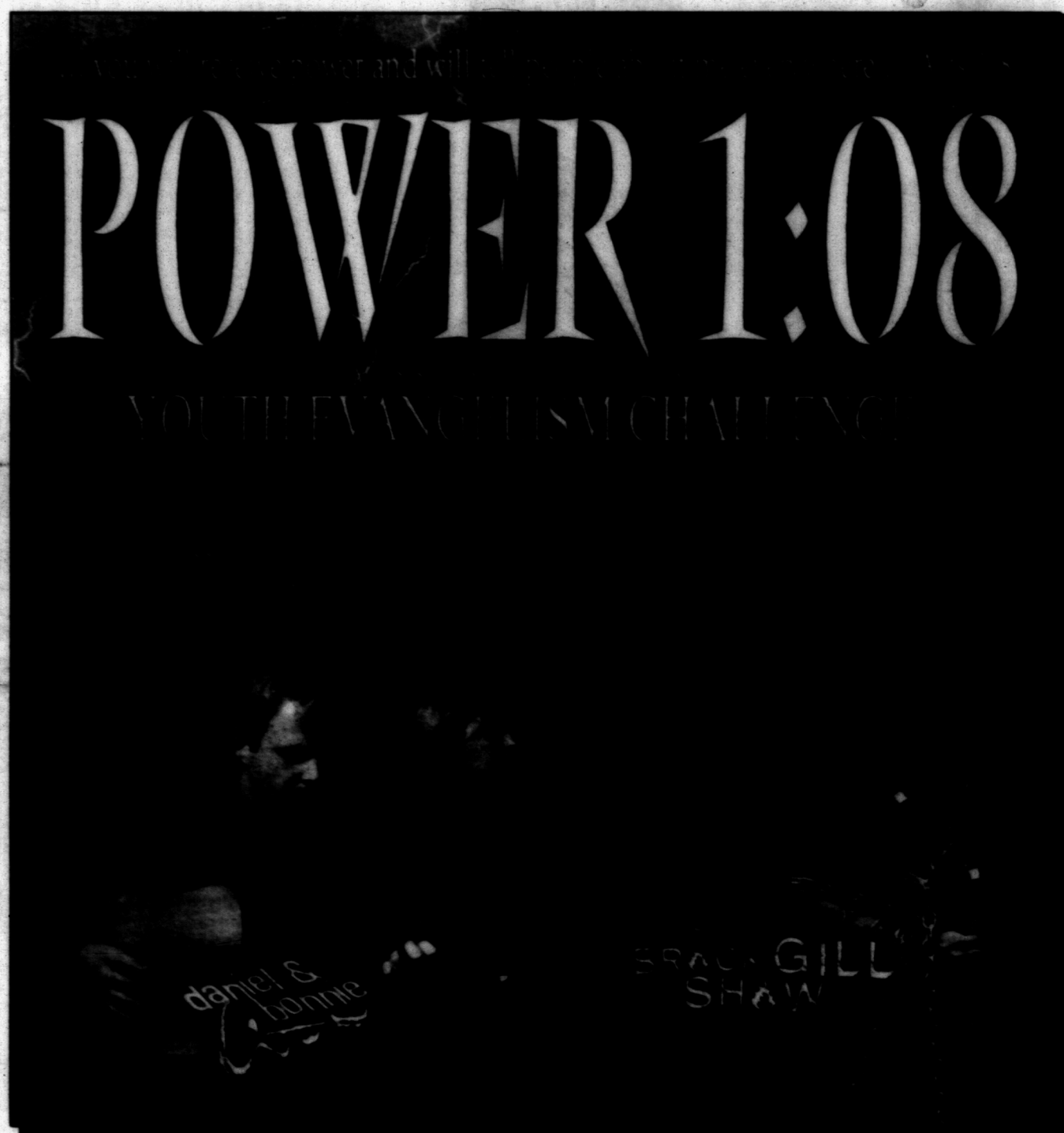
Casey Nelson of First Church, Olive Branch, will be leading grades seven and eight Grade nine will be led by John Matthews, youth minister at First Church, Bogalusa, La. Louis Codone, youth ministry consultant from Pensacola, Fla., will

lead the tenth grade students while Gary Permenter will be with the senior high students in grades 11-12. Mike Brister, Associate pastor/youth minister at First Church, Brookhaven, will lead the adults in a session designed just for them. Worship leaders Daniel and Bonnie Hoover will offer a special session for praise and worship leaders.

The event begins Dec. 28 with registration at 1 p.m., has a break for supper at 4:30 p.m., and then continues until 9 p.m. The Dec. 29 session begins at 9 a.m. with breakout groups, a break for lunch at noon, and then concludes at 4 p.m.

Pre-registration has concluded, but walk-up registration is welcome. Cost for the event is \$15 per person. Meals are "on your own;" a list of hotels and motels is available.

For more information, contact Ellis at the MBCB, toll free at (800) 748-1651, ext. 286, or in Jackson at (601) 292-3313. Email: hgellis@mbcb.org.





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A letter from Lottie Moon, missionary to China, was published in the Foreign Mission Journal in 1887 urging Southern Baptist women to take seriously their role in reaching the world for Christ. In today's busy church life, we sometimes forget her call to prayer, sacrificial giving, and self-denial. As we begin our celebration of Christmas, let's remember the words of Lottie herself:

In a former letter I called attention to the work of Southern Methodist women, endeavoring to use it as an incentive to stir up the women of our Southern Baptist churches to a greater zeal in the cause of missions. I have lately been reading the minutes of the ninth annual meeting of the Woman's Board of Missions, M. E., South and find that in the year ending in June they raised over sixty-six thousand dollars.

I am convinced that one of the chief reasons our Southern Baptist women do so little is the lack of organization. Why should we not learn

GUEST OPINION:



The season of self-denial

By Wanda S. Lee, Exec. Director
Woman's Missionary Union, SBC

from these noble Methodist women, and instead of the paltry offerings we make, do something that will prove that we are really earnest in claiming to be followers of him who, "though he was rich, for our sake became poor?" How do these Methodist women raise so much money? By prayer and self-denial. Note the resolution "unanimously approved" by the meeting above:

"Resolved, That this Board recommend to the Woman's Missionary Society to observe the week preceding Christmas as a week of prayer and self-denial."

Need it be said, why the week before Christmas is chosen? Is not "the festive season when families and friends exchange gifts in memory of The Gift laid on the altar of the world for the redemption of the human race, the most appropriate time to consecrate a portion from abounding riches and scant poverty to send forth the good tidings of great joy into all the earth?"

I wonder how many of us really believe that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." A woman who accepts that state-

ment of our Lord Jesus Christ as a fact, and not as "impractical idealism," will make giving a principle of her life.

To live the call means we must seek God's direction in all aspects of our lives, including stewardship. If we are serious about the mandate to "Go into all the world," the giving of our resources will match the biblical teaching of our Lord. The admonition from Lottie Moon to organize the women and rally their missionary spirits is just as critical today as it was in 1887. WMU did organize the following year, and Lottie's prodding was the impetus for Southern Baptist women to establish the Week of Prayer and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering® for International Missions.

May the needs of the world and our love for our Savior this Christmas call forth a new generation of women committed once again to prayer, sacrificial giving and self-denial so all the world may know Him!

I will never forget the horrible realization three years ago: we would have to defer missionary appointments due to lack of financial resources. After all, we are a missionary-sending agency of the largest evangelical denomination in the world with unlimited potential resources.

Each of the previous two years more than 1,000 new missionaries had been sent around the world, and more candidates were in the process of appointment than ever before. The critical nature of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering® became evident as never before. It is not just providing additional support beyond the Cooperative Program to underwrite the budget of the International Mission Board. It is the means for supporting God-called missionaries to take the Gospel to a lost world.

We in America tend to take our salvation experience for granted as most of us have heard the Gospel all our lives.

GUEST OPINION:



Giving to reach the world

By Jerry Rankin, President
International Mission Board

Yet, hundreds of people groups have never had a Christian witness. There is no church in their town or neighborhood and maybe not in their entire region.

That's why we give: to send and support missionaries to reach the whole world. This year's international missions emphasis is on West Africa, a region that desperately needs more missionary personnel. You will read about the Wolof, Songhai, Tuareg, Fulani and others — but what

will it take to reach all 1,600 tribes and peoples of West Africa?

God is moving in our world, using natural disasters, war, political upheaval, and other changes to open closed doors. In this issue you will read of "Last Frontier" missionaries — people with a pioneer spirit who take the Gospel to difficult places in spite of hardship and isolation.

What will it take to reach the world for Christ? God is doing His part in stirring world events

to create a spiritual hunger in people who are searching for hope only Jesus can provide. God is calling out missionaries from our churches, but will we give to support them and take the Gospel to the ends of the earth?

For the last three years Southern Baptists have stepped up to a new dimension of giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, but there is a price for gaining access and placing missionaries among unreached people groups. Penetrating lostness can be directly linked to missions giving. Without the support, missionaries cannot go.

One hundred percent of the Lottie Moon offering is used in the overseas budget. Meeting the goal of \$150 million in 2006 can assure significant progress in our task of reaching the world. As you read of the missionaries and how God is working, realize it is because we pray and we give. We are all a part of reaching the world.

Have you ever wondered where the ends of the earth are? Think about it. When Jesus used that phrase in Acts 1:8, he had spent most of his life on earth in what is today central Israel. Other than an exile to Egypt when He was a boy (Matthew 2:13-15), His life — and especially His earthly ministry — was spent within dozens of miles of his birthplace. Although He didn't travel there, He obviously knew the "ends of the earth" existed.

But where? The earth is a sphere, therefore there are no fixed points that one could connote as being the end of the earth. So where, then? I believe we know what He meant. "The Rainer Translation" would go something like this: "To the boonies, the back 40, off the beaten path, the middle of nowhere, the place we would never go unless we were taking the Gospel there."

There it is. Jesus told us to go to the places we would never go, for the purpose of sharing the

GUEST OPINION:



Where are today's Isaiahs?

By Thom S. Rainer, President
LifeWay Christian Resources

life-giving news that He is Lord and He is alive!

Unfortunately the ends of the earth are as real and prominent as the day Jesus gave the command to His disciples. That's why this year's International Missions Emphasis shines a spotlight on one of the most spiritually dark places in the world: West Africa.

The people living in West Africa are subjected to voodoo, witchcraft, extreme poverty, tribal genocide, malnutrition, high infant mortality rates,

malaria, yellow fever, AIDS, and a host of other maladies. Death rates are staggering.

As overwhelming to me are the millions of people who have never heard the name of Jesus preached. There are more than 1,000 unreached people groups in this largely Muslim region, and of these groups, 355 — or 22% — have not heard the name of Jesus and are not engaged by any Gospel-sharing organization.

Approximately three-fourths of the region's population (72.6%) is under 30 years of age.

Forty-five percent of the population is 14 years of age or younger. West Africa has 1,612 total people groups, and International Mission Board personnel currently work among 52 of them, representing 28 percent of the population.

Obviously, physically getting to this end of the earth is the easy part. Penetrating the darkness with the "life [that is] the light of men" is the hard part and not for the faint of heart. IMB leaders have noted the region needs more single men willing to invest their lives there.

God is still asking, "Who should I send? Who will go for us?" I am asking, "Are there any Isaiahs out there to respond?" I believe there are, and I pray that God would send those workers out into the field, harvesting souls for the day of salvation while working diligently at the ends of the earth.

For more information, visit
GoWestAfrica.org.

Missionaries use technology, footwork

BURKINA FASO, West Africa — Southern Baptist missionaries David and Tami Wood rumble down a deserted dirt road somewhere in the southwestern corner of Burkina Faso. All they can see from their truck are hills and high grass.

With a map and Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment in hand, they're searching for the Senufo people group. Right now, any signs of life would be good. In this part of West Africa, a good sense of direction and four-wheel drive take them only so far.

With a different language and culture around nearly every mud hut, there is one thing that links most of the people they encounter: a need for faith in Jesus Christ.

"(Some groups) live every day in fear of spirits and forces that are beyond their control," says David Wood, who has served with his wife in West Africa for more than 12 years. "They sacrifice chickens and goats, and they (waste) the little bit of money they've got ... on charlatans."

As members of the "engagement team," the Woods are researching 81 different people groups throughout Burkina Faso and several other West African countries. They, and other Southern Baptist missionaries in West Africa, determine which ones have the greatest need for evangelical work.

The plan is for Baptist churches in the United States to adopt groups with populations less than 100,000 and take the Gospel to them.

On this journey, the Woods compile every scrap of information they can about the Senufo to determine if they already have an evangelical presence in the area. Of all 81 peoples the Woods are studying, five of them fall under the Senufo grouping.

The Senufo divide into 15 smaller groups that scatter across Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Niger, and Mali. Five of the smaller groups are found in Burkina Faso alone.



SEEKING THE LOST — As part of an International Mission Board engagement team, David and Tami Wood are researching more than 80 different people groups throughout West Africa, including the Senufo, to determine which have the greatest need for evangelical work. Separated from the love of Jesus, most Senufo practice either Islam or African traditional religion: the worship of ancestors and spirits. (IMB photo)

Some of these Senufo groups have significant evangelical work among them. Others have no pastors, no churches, no believers and no Bibles in their language. Most of them also vary in language, history and culture, making a cohesive approach unlikely.

"Saying you are Senufo is like saying you are from America," says Wood. "You go from one extreme to the other. ... The same thing holds for all the people groups — all thousand plus in West Africa."

One of the Senufo groups in Burkina Faso with the greatest need for the Gospel is the Western Karaboro, a people of about 16,000. The Woods hope churches will become burdened and begin a committed effort to take the Gospel to them.

"There are no churches," Wood says. "There's little evangelical presence, and that's where we suggest a church gets

plugged in now ...so they can know about Jesus Christ."

Wood says it could be months, even years, before the Gospel reaches the Western Karaboro. "I don't know that some of these villages will ever have a Christian presence," Wood says. "I hope we'll see Christians respond to the need and get into these areas. We know it will take committed people to bring the Gospel to them."

Wood emphasizes that volunteers are vital to the task and key to reaching those people who have little to no access to the Gospel.

"A (church) would have to look at the evangelical resources already available," he said. "You wouldn't want to bring a new person on the field to say, 'Look, you're going to do church-planting work ... without at least touching base

with those evangelical groups already working."

Wood describes his work as putting together a puzzle. To research one people group, they often talk to dozens of people, navigate around dilapidated bridges, hike through millet and cotton fields, camp in tents, grab food from roadside stands or wherever they can along the way.

"You drive for three or four hours, and you find one person who has a little piece of the information," he says. "You get those couple of pieces from him... and the next day or two you go to those places and get more pieces of the puzzle, until you fit it all in and have a good picture of a people group."

Editor's note: Some names in this article have been changed for security reasons.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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Looking back

10 years ago

Baptist Memorial Health Systems in Memphis, which is 1/3 owned by the Mississippi Baptist Convention, raises eyebrows because of a contract through a Desoto County branch hospital to provide health care services for employees of Grand Casino in Tunica.

20 years ago

Preliminary reports indicate Southern Baptist churches baptized 364,000 new believers during 1986, ending a four-year decline in the number of baptisms reported.

60 years ago

The Baptist Sunday School board announces the first publication of Home Life, a Christian family magazine, which will contain "stories of successful Christian homes, poems with a lift, and articles by able fathers and mothers."

Tell me the story of
Jesus

What would you give so she can hear?

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

Our Goal

ime.imb.org

THE BLESSING OF GIVING

Christmas is usually thought of as a season of giving, while it might be appropriately designated as the season of getting. From the time most of us can remember, Christmas was filled with expectations and excitement about the numerous things we would get. Some of you can remember when a big toy catalog would arrive at your house and your imaginations would be stirred into a frenzy by just looking at the possibilities of what you might receive. Now kids can just turn on, click on, and walk through a virtual store packed not with toys but with electronic, magical gadgets that only have numbers or letters — stuff like PSP and iPod. Today's post-modern kid with one foot in Christmas and the other one in cyberspace is no less excited about what he or she might get for Christmas, but the greatest joy comes when we learn to give. It is strange that we take so long in learning the lesson of giving and then we try to communicate that wonderful truth to others. Jesus told His disciples and taught His followers that "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Still most of us have to climb over the mountain of our own selfishness, our own covetous spirit that clings to the interpretation of life that honestly believes that it is more blessed to get than to give. There is no proliferation of items that carry the motto, "It's all about me." They seem to be everywhere you look and growing.

Your world may be all about you and getting is your theme, but if so you will live in an environment of ever



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

decreasing experiences of joy, love, and meaningful relationships. This 2006 Christmas Season we are reminded again of this glowing and glorious truth that "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Many news outlets have carried the story of the secret Santa. This is the fellow who lives in Kansas City and for years he has gone to various places, walked among people who are less fortunate, and handed out \$100 bills. The story all began 35 years ago when Larry Stewart was broke, homeless, and hungry. He walked into a Dixie Diner in Houston, Ms. His plan was to order a meal, eat, and pretend that he had lost his wallet and was unable to pay. He did go into the diner, he did order the food and eat, but then a single act of kindness by a man named Ted Horn changed the direction of Larry Stewart's life. Ted Horn owned the diner and realized Stewart had no money. He leaned down and picked up a twenty dollar bill that he pretended that Larry Stewart may have dropped. He handed it to Larry saying, "I think you dropped this," or something like that. Stewart paid for his meal and left, going on his way not so much thankful that he had received but the seed was planted in his heart that if he

ever had opportunity he was going to be one of those people who would give to others. That is what he has done for years. He went on to be a successful businessman, but until this year he had gone unnoticed, unnamed, and unidentified, touching people's lives and offering them hope, a sense of dignity, and the passing blessing to know that somebody really cares about them.

You may not have millions to pass out, but this Christmas if you can ever get past the getting to the giving phase you will find a world bigger, fuller, and richer than you ever imagined. Larry Stewart is now in the process of battling cancer, but it did not deter him from doing what he has always done — giving. In fact, he made trips from Kansas to Chicago and there he found groups of folks that needed to receive but more importantly Larry needed to give. His face lights up when he talks about not getting but giving. He is no longer a secret and he is not really Santa, but he has planted in his heart the secret that Jesus sought to reveal to us.

For those of you who have an analytical and calculating mind and you can quickly figure out that you have already overspent the budget and there is not enough wherewithall to give

what you would like to give, please realize that giving goes beyond dollars. It is time, love, and kindness. It is a step or two out of the way to give a lift. It is a step back to let someone in a bigger rush than you go ahead. It is a smile when you could give a mean expression. It is living out forgiveness towards someone who hurt you and you have no reason to forgive other than it is the Jesus way. Let me encourage you to try giving in this fashion this Christmas.

- Give a gift anonymously to someone about whom you may know, but you actually do not know. Commit at the outset never to reveal that you gave it. Do not reveal it to your friends, family, or to the person to whom you gave it. Just give it and let it go.

- Prepare an appropriate gift and have it ready to share with someone you do not know and probably will never see again.

- If by chance you are going to be traveling over the holidays, be prepared at least one time to bless someone you may see in a Dixie Diner experience. Have you ever quietly paid for someone's meal who may be seated across the room from you — someone you didn't even know? You got up and left and they were shocked, blessed, and looking around to see who paid the bill. They may never know, but you will never forget the blessing of giving.

Don't stop there! Let God move your heart into new, growing, and larger experiences of joy in learning to give. It is more blessed to give.

The author may be contacted at
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YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

NOBTS bivo music class open for enrollment

January 22 begins the seventh of eight bivocational music courses at six locations in Mississippi sponsored by New Orleans Seminary.

The eight courses are: Song Leading; Worship Planning; Reading Music: Rhythm/Pitch; Reading Music: Harmony/Melody; Hymnology; Music Administration/Staff Relations; Survey of Music Resources; and Class Voice.

These courses are designed to provide basic training for bivocational music directors and other music leaders in churches.

The eight courses meet two hours per week. Each course is eight weeks in length.

The cycle of courses is scheduled over a two-year period. Each course is independent and has no prerequisite. Each student who completes the eight courses earns a Church Music Certificate from New Orleans Seminary plus a credit of eight hours toward an on-campus degree program.

There is a one-time registration fee of \$25.00. The cost of each course is \$125.00. A \$60.00 scholarship is available for all first-time students. Students already enrolled are not eligible. The grant is limited to one person per church.

The seventh course, Survey of Church Music Resources, will meet once a week for two hours for eight consecutive weeks at the following locations and times:

Broadmoor Church, Madison — beginning January 22 (7-9 p.m.). Jimmy McCaleb, teacher. (601) 924-1233.

First Church, Booneville — beginning January 22 (7-9 p.m.). LuAnne Ford, teacher. (662) 728-6272.

Northcrest Church, Meridian — beginning January 22 (6:30 - 8:30 p.m.). Buddy McElroy, teacher. (601) 681-6615; (601) 679-1887.

Hernando Church, Hernando — beginning January 22 (7-9 p.m.). Barry Tweedy, teacher. (662) 429-6361.

Tri-County Association Building, Columbia — beginning January 23 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). R.E. Thompson, teacher. (601) 270-8166.

Winston Association Building, Louisville — beginning January 23 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). Dave Tribble, teacher. (662) 803-9990.

These classes could also be offered at other locations in the state, where 8-10 students are interested in enrolling.

For more information, contact Jimmy McCaleb at (601) 292-3273 or (800) 748-1651, ext. 273. E-mail: jmccaleb@mbcb.org.

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MS POSITIONS

AUBURN BAPTIST CHURCH TUPELO, Miss., is seeking a full-time Minister of Children/Education. All applicants please submit resume to Auburn Baptist Church 1138 Road 931 Tupelo, MS 38804.

THE METRO BAPTIST ASSOCIATION is seeking resumes for the position of Associational Missions Director. Metro Association comprises Hinds and Madison counties. MBA has 82 churches

and over 70,000 members. Resumes may be sent to: Search Committee; 6530 Dogwood View Parkway; Jackson, MS 39213. Deadline for receiving resumes is March 1, 2007.

EAST PHILADELPHIA BAPTIST CHURCH in Philadelphia, Miss., is seeking a student/youth minister. Seminary degree preferred. If interested, send resume to mcheatham@choctaw.org or call Mark Cheatham at (601) 650-9271.

Senegal boys given up to beg on streets, study Quran

SENEGAL, West Africa—It's a tough life for a kid. You wake in the darkness before dawn and roll off a wooden pallet, one of the "beds" you share with 30 other boys on the dirt floor of a grimy, three-room dwelling.

You rub your eyes, eat something — if there's anything to eat — and begin chanting verses from the Quran, Islam's holy book. You have no idea what the Arabic words mean, but you chant them over and over. You remember the day your mother brought you to this place and handed you over to the "serigne" (suh-REEN), your Muslim teacher.

"I don't want to see him again until he knows the Quran," she had told the serigne, following custom. With tears in her eyes, she pried your trembling fingers loose from her hand and hurried away.

You were five years old. You won't see her again for a decade or more, if ever.

The chanting done, you set out into the sandy streets of Yoff, a sprawling section of Dakar, capital of the West African nation of Senegal. Carrying an empty tomato can, you spend much of the day begging under the white-hot sun. People drop sugar cubes, food, or perhaps a coin or two into your can, fulfilling their duty as Muslims to give alms to the poor.

If you return without a full can, you risk a caning across your back.

You are a "talibe" (TAL-ee-bay), which means "student." The word comes from the same Arabic root word as "Taliban," the radical Islamic "students" who ruled Afghanistan before being overthrown in 2001. In theory, you are a student of the Quran, learning to be a ser-

vant of Islam through poverty and humility.

In reality, you are a beggar. Thousands of ragged talibes wander the streets of Senegal. Community leaders push to end the talibe system from time to time, but it remains entrenched in Senegalese Muslim society. Some talibes are treated relatively well by their serigne teachers; others are neglected or worse.

Do poverty-stricken parents give young sons to be talibes for religious reasons, or because they are too poor to feed another child?

"They say it's religious," answers a Senegalese Baptist layman who ministers to talibes through a church in Dakar. "But it's hunger."

On this day, however, the talibe boys of Yoff are in for a pleasant surprise. As they trickle back from begging, they get a warm welcome from regular visitors: Southern Baptist missionaries Cal McIntire and David and Cheryl Johnson. With the missionaries are a group of student volunteers from Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo.

The Southwest volunteers, assisted by some laughing talibe boys and other neighborhood kids, set about hauling buckets of gravel and broken rock into the dormitory to sprinkle across the dirt floor. Then they spread sand and wet concrete over the top. When it dries, the boys have a clean surface on which to lay the new foam sleeping pallets their visitors have brought.

Later, the boys drop their filthy clothes into buckets of boiling water. Standing naked behind sheets, they bashfully submit to medicated treatment, repeated over three days, of the scabies that ravages their skin.

The contagious skin disease, spread by mites, flourishes on

seldom-washed skin and clothing, causing agonizing itching and pain.

The volunteers fight back tears as they gently apply the soap and medication to the boys' disfigured skin. When they're done, they hand out new clothes and bags with toothbrushes and other basics.

"These kids are in pretty bad shape, health-wise," David Johnson says. "In addition to malnutrition, they have all kinds of skin problems, mostly from sleeping in the sand."

They also crave attention and love. They come running whenever McIntire, an easygoing guy with a ready smile, visits their neighborhood.

"The little ones almost never have anyone just hold them," explains McIntire, rubbing the back of a talibe boy clinging to his neck. "David and I do that as much as we can — just hold 'em and hug 'em."

While they work to improve living conditions for the talibes, the Southwest students also participate in the "ministry of touch."

"I did a lot of picking little kids up, putting them on my shoulders, lifting them high in the air and stuff," says volunteer Jarrod Easterwood, age 22. "I loved it, just spending time with the kids. That's what they love. They don't get a whole lot of it."

As good as such ministry feels, it's not just feel-good ministry. McIntire is missionary strategy coordinator for the 150,000 Lebou (LAY-boo) people of West Africa, who live mostly in Senegal. Islamic and traditionally fishermen, the Lebou settled the coastal peninsula, where bustling Dakar now sits, centuries ago. More than 18,000 of them live in Yoff.

Through working with the talibes, who have special significance to the greater community, and other children's ministries,

McIntire and his co-workers have won many Lebou friends in Yoff. On this day, at least 10 neighborhood residents passing by pronounce blessings on the missionaries and volunteers for helping the talibe.

"We 'love on' the kids in order to share Jesus with the parents," McIntire explains. "We're able to come in and do more of what we want to do after we do something like this. The people

here know we care about them."

There are only a handful of Christian believers among the Lebou so far, but the first Lebou home fellowship recently began in Yoff. McIntire hopes to see four or five more meeting by the end of this year.

One day, the talibes may be liberated from their service. Meanwhile, the Lebou are hearing about the liberating love of Christ.



BEFRIENDING THE LOST — Andy Snyder, a student at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo., hangs out with his new buddy, a "talibe" street kid in Dakar, Senegal. The talibe (Arabic for "student") boys are sent by their parents to live with a Muslim teacher and learn Islam's holy book. They spend most of their days, however, begging on the streets. (IMB photo)



MINISTRY TO NEGLECTED — Southern Baptist missionary Cheryl Johnson sits and talks with "talibe" street boys in Dakar, Senegal, while Southwest Baptist University volunteers prepare bags of food for the boys. Loving the often-neglected boys is a ministry in itself, and it opens hearts and doors in the wider Lebou community in Dakar. (IMB photo)



Lottie Moon Christmas Offering®
National Goal: \$150 million

Our Goal: _____

**That all peoples
may know Him**

JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Miracle on Main Street, Calvary Church, Oak Grove



2. Harless and wife, Pearl River Association



3. Hanging of the Green, Grandview Church, Pearl



4. Power Team Crusade, Jasper Association



5. Preschool Recognition, Indian Springs Church, Jones Assoc.

1. Calvary Church, Oak Grove, presented Miracle on Main Street Dec. 10. Shown are the participants.

2. The Pearl River Association hosted Jim and Kay Harless, who served as missionaries-in-residence Dec. 3-6 as a part of the season of prayer for International Missions. The couple made presentations at five churches and two associational events, and are on retirement furlough after 35 years of service in Colombia.

3. Grandview Church, Pearl, recently held its hanging of the green. The congregation joined the youth, elementary, and preschool children in decorating the sanctuary and in singing carols. Shown are the participants.

4. Jasper Association recently hosted the Power Team as a county wide crusade. One of its members, Riley Israel, was the guest speaker at Lake Como Church during the morning worship service. Shown are pastor Kevin Bishop, Israel, and Darrell Patrick.

5. Indian Springs Church, Jones Association, recently observed preschool recognition for parent and church commitment for the newest preschoolers. Shown are Kady and Hayden McGill, Abbey Glasscock, Makenzie Williams and Rase Jones with their families.

6. First Church, Ripley, ordained Steve Cohea to the ministry Dec. 3. Shown are transitional pastor P.J. Scott, Cohea, Donna Cohea, and Bill McCreary.

7. Slayden Church, Slayden, sponsored a Trunk or Treat event Nov. 30. Shown are some of the participants.

8. Matt Leach, right, minister of music at Lakeshore Church, Jackson, is shown presenting a stained glass cross to Danny Rutland, who had served the church for ten months as interim pastor.

9. Vernal Church, George County, recently began a GED program as a mission project. Twenty-five students were enrolled in two months. Pastor Willie Wimbs states that this effort brought life to a church that was on the brink of death. Shown is Betty Wimbs presenting the first graduate, Jessica Stewart, her diploma, along with other class members.

10. Priceville Church, Tupelo, ordained Ken Barron as deacon Sept. 26.



6. Cohea Ordained, First Church, Ripley



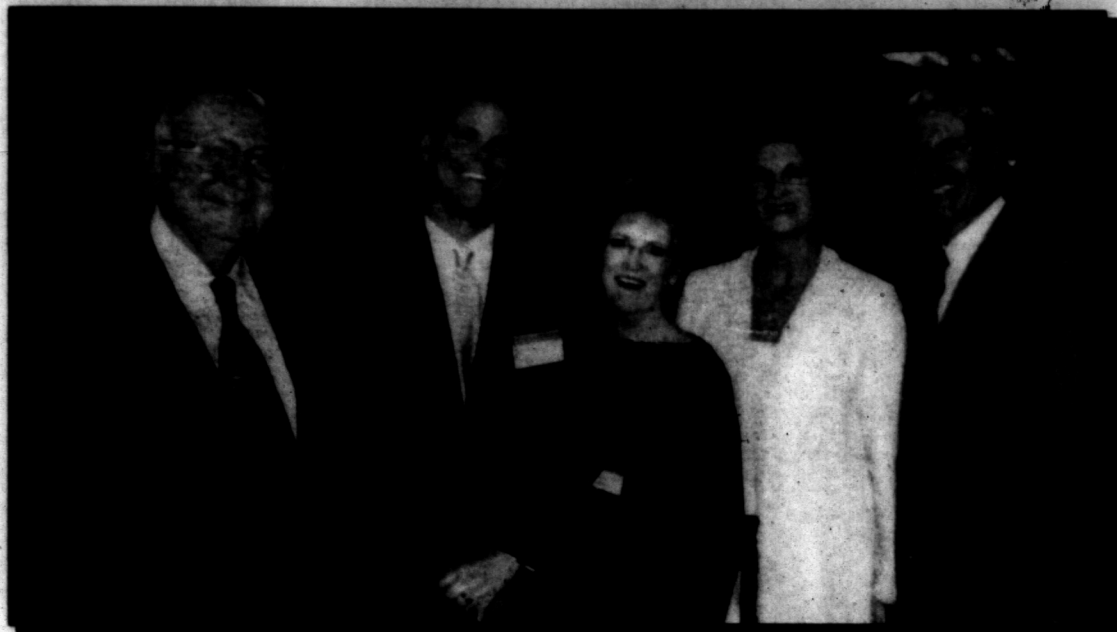
7. Trunk or Treat, Slayden Church, Slayden



8. Rutland Honored, Lakeshore Church, Jackson



9. GED Program, Vernal Church, George County



1. King, Burnett, Ward, Bounds, and Musgrove, WCU

1. Tommy King, acting president of William Carey University; Ben Burnett, principal of Oak Grove Middle School and vice president of Phi Delta Kappa International Education Society; Patricia Ward, dean of the WCU school of education; Melody Bounds, Mississippi Department of Education Special Education representative; and former Governor Ronnie Musgrove pose for photographs before the PDKI Education Society 21st

Century Mississippi Schoolhouse Forum held on the Hattiesburg campus of WCU. Fourteen new members were initiated into the Pine Belt Gamma Gamma Chapter of PDKI.

2. William Carey University student Nathan Sumrall of Hattiesburg won the Collegiate Artist Competition in Piano at the Mississippi Music Teachers Association (MMTA) fall convention held recently at Millsaps College.

3. New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has announced the establishment of the Robert S. Magee Doctoral Fellowship in honor of the late Robert S. Magee for his fifty years of pastoral ministry to Southern Baptists, including 34 years as pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Ruston, La. The fund, the first of its kind for NOBTS, will award fellowships to new and currently enrolled students in the institution's research doctoral program. Awards will be based upon the student's academic achievement and scholarly potential. NOBTS administrators believe the fund will help in recruiting top quality students. For information on how to make a contribution to the Robert S. Magee Doctoral Fellowship contact the Office for Institutional Advancement at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary at (504) 282-4455, ext. 3252.

4. Bobby P. Martin, president and CEO of The Peoples Bank of Ripley, was recognized by the Blue Mountain College and the BMC National Alumnae Association during recent Founder's Day activities. Martin has served as a member of BMC's Board of Trustees for 18 years during which time he served eight years on the Executive Committee of the Board and five years as Chair of the Board.



4. Martin Recognized for service, BMC

During his tenure, Martin has participated in two major events in the College's history. In 2001, he served on the President Search Committee that saw the College inaugurate its first woman president. He also served as Chair of the Board of Trustees in 2005 when the College became a fully co-educational institution of higher learning.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



11. GAs, North Winona Church, Winona

11. The 1st-6th grade GAs of North Winona Church, Winona, recently enjoyed decorating and sharing Lottie Moon teacakes during their study of international missions. Shown are the participants.

12. Acteens from Liberty Church, New Albany, hosted a Worldcraft party Oct. 25, raising \$300. The girls dressed in native costumes, tried food from different countries, and held a Mission Quest project to study about different countries.

13. First Church, Yazoo City, recently ordained Kevin Erikson, Jimmy Pickens, and Jeremy Tillman as deacons. Shown are Erikson, Pickens, Tillman and pastor Doug Broome.

14. The RAs of First Church, Holly Springs, observed RA emphasis week by participating in the Sunday morning worship service. The Lads and Crusaders competed in an annual derby car race, with Zachary Sorrell placing as overall grand champion.



14. RAs, First Church, Holly Springs



13. Deacon Ordinations, First Church, Yazoo City

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STATE CHANGE

1. Rex Yancey will become the pastor of First Church, Ripley, January 14, 2007. He has been the pastor of First Church, Pascagoula since January of 1992. Yancey is a graduate of Blue Mountain College, and earned his master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He has been President of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and Chairman of the Executive Committee. Yancey served two years as President of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. He has authored two books, Jerked Up and Called, and Hot off the Press, Post Katrina Thoughts.



Yancey

Hospital struggles to treat ailing Ghanans



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GHANA, West Africa — All eyes focus on missionary surgeon Danny Crawley as he navigates an obstacle course of beds and sick children at the Baptist Medical Center in Nalerigu, Ghana.

With only one other doctor, a handful of assistants, and volunteers working that day, a "doctor sighting" is a significant moment to those desperate for medical attention. While making his rounds, Crawley tends to as many patients as possible before prepping for surgery. The others will have to wait.

Understaffed and overwhelmed by the daily influx of patients, the hospital struggles to fill an empty position and attract volunteers while meeting the physical and spiritual needs of patients. In 2005, the hospital saw more than 72,000 patients and performed more than 3,500 major and minor surgeries. The staff hopes more Southern Baptists will respond to these needs soon.

"Even if I stop and pray with a patient, I feel like I'm slowing down the process," said Crawley, who sets aside one day a week with his wife Mary Jane to share Bible stories in area villages, "but if we're not letting them know that we're helping

them in the name of Christ, what is the point of it?"

Without four doctors on staff, the hospital is unable to maintain a consistent ministry presence among the villages in the area. It hasn't always been this way for the hospital that each year attracts thousands of people from four different countries.

Nearly three years ago, everything seemed to be falling into place for the hospital staff. A promising 47-year-old doctor

named Janette Shackles had come on board to reduce the demanding workload of the hospital's three doctors.

The addition boosted the morale of a worn-out staff. "She had a wonderful ministry, and she related so well to the patients," says former hospital administrator Patricia Friesen. "Our doctors were making the work schedules more manageable. They were even having time to do outside evangelistic ministries, which they each have a desire to do."

Tragedy changed all of that when Shackles died in a traffic accident June 9, 2003. She was on her way back to the hospital with medical supplies when an oncoming vehicle hit her truck.

"It was devastating," Friesen remembers. "It was just a difficult time. It really was, besides the personal loss of losing a colleague, but also the impact of how we had finally gotten more positions."

Today, with the three remaining doctors, some on staff wonder if the gap left by Shackles will ever be filled. The long hours and daily stress continue to take their toll on all involved.

"It's always been hard with long hours and hard work," says George Faile, who has been a physician at the hospital for 17 years, "but this is the first time in a couple years that I've wondered if maybe God had something else for me."

Strong words from a man whose father, George Faile, started the hospital nearly 50 years ago. Since then, the elder Faile has passed away. A monument on the facility's front lawn honors his work. Faile refers to his father as a "big inspiration" in his life. He said he still desires to finish the work to which God has called him.

"I feel like I have a lot invested here," he says.

Hospital administration recognizes the doctors need more time off and more time for min-

istry opportunities in area villages. Providing quality care, however, brings huge responsibility. Turning a patient away isn't an option.

"Do we tell them, 'You came too far, go back to where you came from?'" asks Friesen, hospital administrator for the past five years. "Where will (they) go?"

On a typical clinic day at the hospital, hundreds of people make their way onto the property. In the crowd, people are afflicted with malaria, snake bites, various skin diseases, heart problems, AIDS, and just about everything else.

Some lie on the ground, some sit slumped on benches, while others stand for hours. None of them will be sent away before someone on the medical staff sees them.

Volunteers such as Doug and Alice Parkin from Casa Grande, Az., help make this possible. The Parkins often take a couple months off a year from their own medical work to assist the hospital through malaria season.

"The physicians are just so exhausted," says Parkin, a doctor at a group practice and member of Grace Church in Casa Grande. "When you come as a volunteer, the doctors are able to deal with more serious problems, and you

can help with the more mundane things like malaria, (tuberculosis), and diarrhea."

"This hospital is a light in a pretty desperate part of the world," he adds, but bringing in full-time doctors and volunteers isn't a quick fix, either.

Completing the missionary appointment process, language and hospital training could take candidates at least two years. Most volunteers are limited in what they can do with their minimal language and field experience.

However, the staff will take as many volunteers as they can find. "I almost cried when I found out (a fifth-year surgical resident) was coming," says Crawley, who has worked at the hospital nearly 10 years. "She was an answer to prayer."

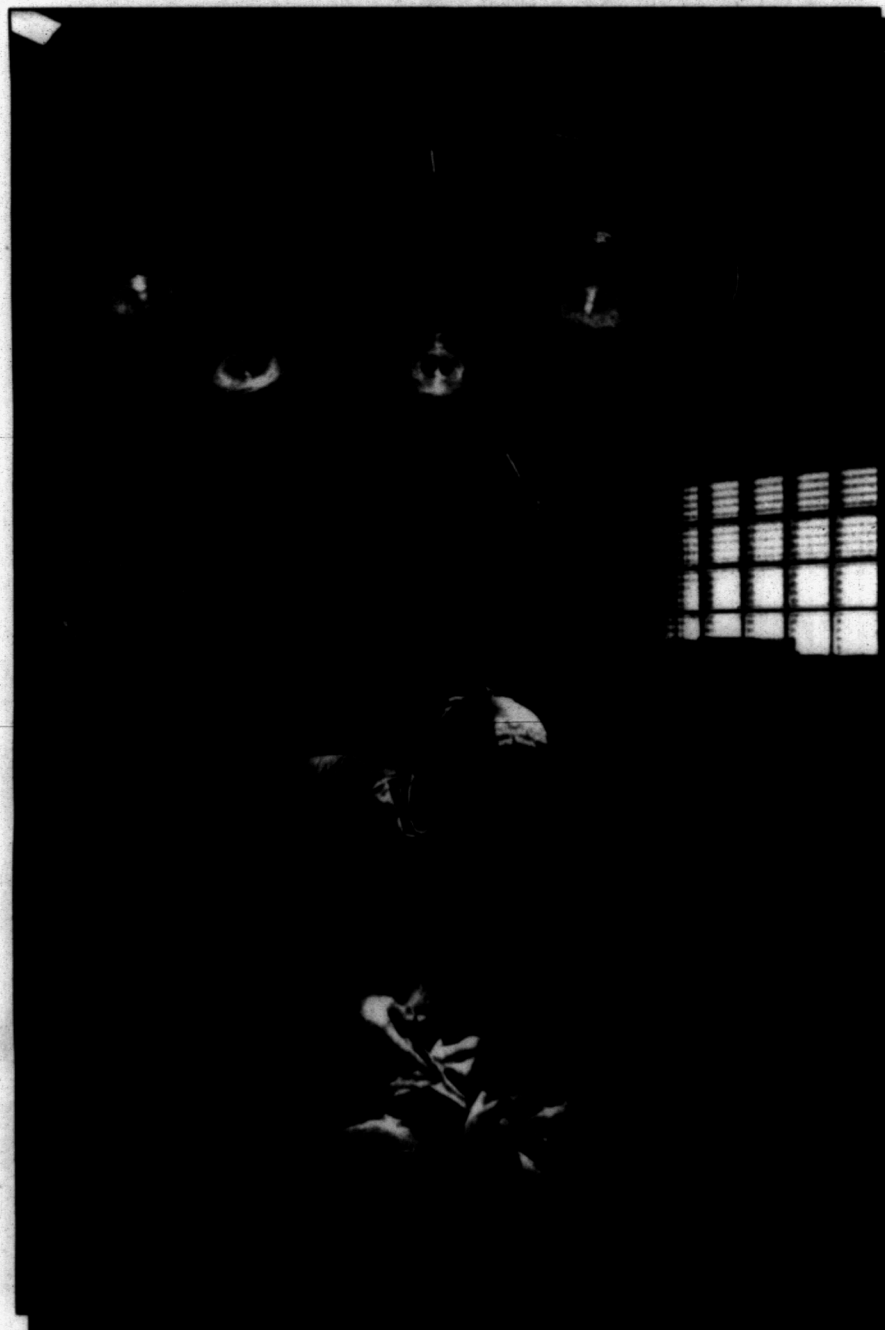
Without more volunteers and another full-time doctor, Crawley fears the hospital will be unable to sustain its care many more years.

"Opportunities are coming to us," he says. "We just need to be able to follow up with them."

For more information on how you can volunteer or become a full-time physician at the Baptist Medical Centre in Ghana, call the International Mission Board at (800) 999-3113.



PACKED WAITING ROOM — A mass of people wait for medical treatment at the Baptist Medical Centre in Nalerigu, Ghana. Three IMB missionary doctors serve at the facility. Medical missionaries hope Southern Baptists will respond soon to the need for more personnel at the hospital. (IMB photo)



HEALING WITNESS — Missionary surgeon Danny Crawley performs a hernia operation at the Baptist Medical Centre in Nalerigu, Ghana. The medical staff saw more than 72,000 patients and performed more than 3,500 surgeries in 2005. (IMB photo)

MBHC to hold workshop

Clinton, Ms. (Special) — The Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission will host an Anniversary and History Writing Workshop from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. on February 17 in the B.C. Rogers Student Center on the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton.

Churches celebrating significant anniversaries of 100, 125, 150, 175, or 200 years in 2007, 2008, or 2009, are encouraged to attend. All churches are invited.

Sessions will include The Value of Celebrating Significant Anniversaries; The Nuts and Bolts of Writing a Church History; The Methodology in Planning a Significant Anniversary; and The Triad of Anniversary Celebration.

The Workshop will include speakers from churches who have celebrated significant anniversaries.

For more information, contact the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission at P.O. Box 4024, Clinton, MS 39058. Telephone: (601) 925-3434. E-mail: mbhc@mc.edu.

Speakers Tournament resources available

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — The Discipleship and Family ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) has released a new instructional video for the Mississippi Baptist Youth Speakers Tournament.

Each pastor of a cooperating Mississippi Baptist church will receive the new video for use in his church in the December Light Packet mailed from the convention board. The instructional video has speeches from the past three youth winners of the competition, as well as tips for preparing a speech.

The three past winners included in the video are Whitney Wilson, Joshua McCormick, and Laura Leigh Bingham. Wilson's speech was videotaped during the 2006 Mississippi Baptist Youth Night this past summer at the Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson, while McCormick's and Bingham's speeches were recorded during the Growing Churches 2006 conference at Patterson Place on the grounds of Camp Garaywa in Clinton.



The video contains an interview with Wilson on how she prepared her speech, and the four-year scholarship she received from one of Mississippi Baptists' three institutions of higher learning. The three Mississippi Baptist institutions that participate in the Youth Speakers Tournament scholarship program are Mississippi College in Clinton, Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain, and William Carey University in Hattiesburg.

The video also includes Marcus Peagler, MBCB Discipleship and Family Ministry director, discussing training and assistance available to churches and high school students who want to participate in the Youth Speakers Tournament.

Other resources available from the Discipleship and Family Ministry Department include:

- current Youth Speakers Tournament brochure.
- Instructional video for Bible Drill.
- Bible Drill pamphlets for Bible Buddies.
- Bible Drill pamphlets for Children's Bible Drill.
- Bible Drill pamphlets for Youth Bible Drill.
- Bible Drill pamphlets for Adult Bible Drill.
- The book, *Speaker Power: How to Get It and Use It*, by Steve Williams.

All materials listed are provided by the Mississippi Cooperative Program at no charge to Mississippi Baptist churches. For more information and to order resources, contact Debbie Brashier in the MBCB Discipleship and Family Ministry Department at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3284 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 284. E-mail: dbrashier@mbcb.org.

Bibliocipher

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CTXIWTG VXKT WTTS ID
UPQATH PCS TCSATHH
VTCTPADVXTH, LWXRW
BXCXHITG IWPC VDSAN
TSXUNXCV LWXRW XH
XC UPXIW; HD SD.

UXGHI IXBDIWN DCT:

UDJG

Clue: C = N

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Romans Seven:Four.

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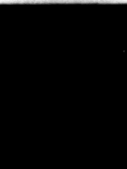









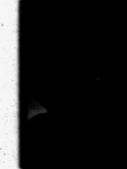


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ASHLEY COUNTY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION of Crossett, Arkansas is accepting resumes for the position of Associational Missionary. This is a full time position that consists of serving 25 churches in Southeast Arkansas. Deadline for receiving resumes is March 1, 2007. Send Resumes to: Search Committee, Ashley Baptist Association, 1547 Hwy. 52W, Crossett, Arkansas, 71635 or email to acba9395@alltel.net.



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BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Jesus, God's Greatest Gift

Luke 1:26-35, 2:4-7

By Gloria Lofton

We are continuing our study of life-changing gifts. This week we are studying Jesus, God's greatest gift.

December 25 is the most beloved holiday for Christians and non-Christians. For Christians it is a special time to praise God for loving us enough to send His only begotten Son for the purpose of reconciliation. For non-Christians, Christmas is the celebration of the birth of a well-known historical figure — one who was a great prophet and contributed so much to society. Their celebration consists of an indulgence in materialism.

The Jewish law held engagement to be as binding as marriage. An engagement was completed after negotiations had been carried out by the groom's representative and after the dowry had been paid to the bride's father. After the betrothal the groom could claim his wife at anytime. The wedding was merely a recognition of the arrangement that had been established.

Luke 1:26-31 says, "Gabriel was sent from God to Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, one of the descendants of David; the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in he said to her, 'Hail, favored one! The Lord is with



Lofton

you." (v.28, NASB). When Mary saw him, she was troubled at the statement and wondered what this could mean. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary. For you have found favor with God, and behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a Son, and you

shall name him Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21).

The first hint of the virgin birth is found in Genesis 3:15. The one to defeat Satan was to be born of "the seed of a woman." This is a biological miracle; there is no "seed of a woman." From this we are to understand that One was to be born of a woman without a human father.

The angel Gabriel continued telling Mary in v. 32, "He shall be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give unto Him

the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end." Mary asked Gabriel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" (v. 34b). "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring will be called the Son of God" (v. 25).

In Matthew 2:24b-25, Joseph took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until Jesus was born. Micah prophesied that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. God is sovereign over all the affairs of the world. He uses rulers of the nations to bring about His purpose. The decree Caesar Augustus gave brought about the fulfillment of the prophecy.

Because Joseph was a descendant of David, he went to Bethlehem to be registered. While he and Mary were there, she went into labor. "And she gave birth to her firstborn Son

and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger. Because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7).

From a worldly view, what a humble birth; from a Christian's view, what a miraculous birth. God knew we needed a Savior. He could not leave us in an unreconciled state. This had to be a sinless birth for sinful people. I fall on my knees and cry holy to my sovereign God, and I will praise Him forever.

As we celebrate Christ's birth, let us be careful lest we leave Him in the manger. Let us follow Him to the cross where He was nailed, to the grave where He was laid, and to the resurrection where He conquered sin and death. Let us not stop here; but take His message to the lost world so they may join us in the Christian celebration of Christmas.

Lofton is a member of Willow Grove Church, Collins.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Honoring the Savior's Birth

Matthew 1:18-25a, 9-11

By Tim Alexander

This week's Bible Study provides an opportunity to learn about the first Christmas and choose new ways to make your Christ-Centered celebration even more meaningful. God blessed us with the first gift of Christmas — Jesus. A truly meaningful Christmas observance celebrates the central message of Christmas: Honoring the Savior's Birth

1. Believe God's Message (Matthew 1:18-25)

Matthew begins with the historical record or genealogy of Jesus' family tree. Genealogies were very important to Jews; without it they could not prove their tribal memberships or their rights to inheritance. Luke gave Mary's lineage, while Matthew records the Lord's family tree through

Joseph, His earthly father.

2. Live in Obedience (Matthew 1:24-25)

We find a young Jewish woman named Mary who was engaged to a man named Joseph. One must understand that engagements during Mary and Joseph's day were different than they are today. The Jewish engagement, or betrothal, agreement was as binding as a modern marriage. Mary, a young 12 or 13 year old, who knew no man physically, was found to be with a child. Joseph was older than Mary; he was probably 17 or 18 years old at the time of the engagement. What do you suppose Joseph thought when he discovered Mary was pregnant? Naturally, Joseph thought Mary had been unfaithful. Before Joseph carried out his plan to put her



Alexander

away privately, not to disgrace her, an angel appeared to him in a dream. The angel revealed to Joseph that Mary, a virgin, would bear a son and His name would be Jesus. The angel gave Joseph the direction he needed. Through the miraculous conception, by the Holy Spirit, Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb. The angel also revealed to Joseph that the child was to be called Immanuel (God with us), Isaiah 7:14. As Joseph awoke from his dream, he was willing to walk by faith. Think about what faith it took as a young righteous man and the even younger Mary to obediently follow the path God had revealed to them.

3. Seeking the King (Matthew 2:1-5a)

Why would anyone resist the good news of Jesus' birth? Herod had his selfish reasons. When Herod learned about the wise men's quest for a child "King of the Jews," he was "troubled." When King Herod

was troubled, "all Jerusalem with him" worried. After the first gift of Christmas was born in Bethlehem in the days of King Herod, the wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem. Herod the Great ruled over the Jews from 37 to 4 B.C. The wise men guided by the star came to see the child king. Many Bible scholars believe that the wise men were from Persia (modern day Iran). The Bible does not give a number of how many wise men brought gifts. We assume since there were three gifts there were three Magi or wise men. It was no surprise the ruthless murderer, Herod, wanted to kill Jesus. Herod wanted no one except him to be called the "King of the Jews."

Have you ever noticed that the Christmas season brings out the best and the worst in people? So many people catch the "Christmas spirit" and have a contagious giving spirit of joy, hope to the poor, homeless, and unto the least of our society. We also see some "Scrooges." Voices prevail that are anti-religious, anti-Christian sentiment this time of year. Some are serious about removing "Christ"

from Christmas — Herod's kind is still around.

4. Worship Jesus (Matthew 2:9-11)

The Scripture reveals that the star was visible to the wise men (magi) as they trekked toward Bethlehem. As they traveled the star guided them to Jesus. By the time the wise men arrived in Bethlehem, Mary and infant Jesus were living in a house. When they saw Jesus they fell to the ground and worshiped him. After worship took place, gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh were given to Jesus. These gifts were suitable for a king.

Two fulfillments of scripture are found in the early chapters of Matthew. First, how Jesus was born was a fulfillment of scripture and, second, where He was born was a fulfillment of prophecy.

As Christians, may we remember "it is more blessed to give than to receive." I pray you will have a Christ-centered Christmas this year. Merry Christmas!

Alexander is Minister of Education, Harrisburg Church, Tupelo.

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BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Salvation for All

Luke 2:25-38

By Gloria Lofton

As we focus on a new year, many will make resolutions of fresh commitments they believe will improve the quality of their lives. However, few will follow through for more than a few weeks. Few of those resolutions will result in changed lives. One decision can truly transform a life; the decision to receive God's gift of salvation in Jesus.

We are continuing our study of life-changing gifts. This week's study is: Salvation For All. Last week's study was: Jesus, God's Greatest Gift. The miraculous birth of Jesus has had the greatest impact on the human race of any event in history. The news of Jesus' birth spread quickly after the announcement to the shepherds by the angels, the shep-

herds' leaving with such haste indicated they did not doubt the reality of the angels' proclamation, but accepted it as truth. They returned, praising and glorifying God. They had seen Jesus, the embodiment of God's promised salvation. To see Jesus is to see salvation.

Our focus passage is Luke 2:25-38. Verse 25 says, "And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon: and this man was just and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel is the expected Messiah, who would deliver the Jews from their oppressors. In verse 26 we are told the Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon he would not see death until he saw the Lord's Christ. Verse 27 tells us Simeon was led by the Spirit to the temple where Mary and Joseph had come to present Jesus



Lofton

of all peoples, A light of Revelations to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." Verse 28-321 (NASB). The word "Now" at the beginning of verse 29 marks a decisive turning point in Simeon's life. Encountering Jesus always marks a turning point in the life of a person. Who can meet Jesus and not have a dramatic turning around of his or her life? Simeon was ready to die now that he had seen God's glory.

Joseph and Mary were amazed as they heard the things spoken by Simeon. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel." Verse 34. Simeon prophesied that Mary would be grieved

to the Lord, and offer a sacrifice. When Simeon saw Jesus, "He took Him in his arms and blessed God, and said, 'Now Lord, Thou dost let thy bondservant depart in peace, according to the word; For my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou has prepared in the presence of all peoples, A light of Revelations to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.'" Verse 28-321 (NASB). The word "Now" at the beginning of verse 29 marks a decisive turning point in Simeon's life. Encountering Jesus always marks a turning point in the life of a person. Who can meet Jesus and not have a dramatic turning around of his or her life? Simeon was ready to die now that he had seen God's glory.

by the widespread rejection of her son, Jesus. He would cause the fall and rise of many in Jerusalem. Jesus is not just one more Jewish child, but pivotal for faith. Those who believe in Him rose to new heights; those who rejected Him fell into darker despair. No person can be neutral in regard to Jesus. We must accept Him or reject Him. Those who reject Him and do not repent will fail. Those who receive Him will rise. If God convicts your heart that Jesus is the Christ, God's only begotten Son and Savior of the world, please do not reject Him.

In verse 36-38, we read about the prophetess Anna, who was advanced in years, probably over a hundred. He lived in the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. After Simeon had blessed Mary and Joseph, Anna began giving thanks to God and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Simeon had blessed Mary and Joseph. Anna began giving thanks to God and continued to

speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Simeon and Anna were advanced in age, but they were still being used by God. Our senior adults have much wisdom and many experiences that can help encourage our young people. The Bible tells the elders to instruct the younger in the ways of God. How our young people today need the wisdom and encouragement of our senior adults! Pray that we will uphold our senior adults in their willingness to be used of God.

We have studied faith, hope, love, Jesus, and salvation in this study theme this month. By receiving the gift of salvation, faith, love, and Jesus become more than mere words. They become life-transforming realities in a person's life. This salvation is for all, regardless of social standing, nationality, rich or poor, male or female. Above all, it is free. Oh, what an awesome God we serve.

Lofton is a member of Willow Grove Church, Collins.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Working Cooperatively

Nehemiah 1:1-3:32

By Tim Alexander

Nehemiah demonstrates great leadership; he was an outstanding person. Nehemiah's name means "comforts or encourages." Nehemiah had a distinguished job as the king's cupbearer. This was an office of trust; tasting the king's food and drink, he stood between the king and death. Nehemiah, a Jew and a captive, serving a Gentile king in such a strategic position, spoke well of his strong character. Nehemiah served King Artaxerxes, who ruled from 464 to 423 B.C. He also would give the king advice, if asked. A man in Nehemiah's position could do great good or great evil. Nehemiah made the right choice; he followed the Lord, and used his influence correctly.

This book can be divided into four sections. First, the

rebuilding of the Jerusalem walls (chapter 1-7), second, the Great Revivals (chapters 8-10), third, the population and census information (chapter 11-12), fourth and finally, the reforms of Nehemiah (chapter 13).

1. Begin with Prayer (Nehemiah 1:1-4)

The Lord used this man of character to comfort and revive the spirit of the discouraged exiles and bring them a ray of hope. Nehemiah was living in the fortress of Susa, the winter home of the Persian king. Nehemiah had compassion for the remnant that was left in captivity. He saw the broken condition of the wall and the gates that were burned.

Verse four states that Nehemiah wept. Sometime weeping is a sign of weakness, but in Nehemiah's case it was a



Alexander

sign of strength. Twelve times prayer is mentioned in this book. Nehemiah was a prayer warrior! Nehemiah spent several days, fasting weeping and praying. He knew that something had to be done to rescue and restore Jerusalem. Like Isaiah, you can hear Nehemiah saying "here am I, send me." Nehemiah was willing, and cared enough, to volunteer his time to do the work.

2. Take Steps of Faith (Nehemiah 2:4-5, 8B)

The scriptures tell us to "wait upon the Lord and we will renew our strength." (Isaiah 40:31) Nehemiah had waited approximately four months when the king recognized that Nehemiah was sad. Nehemiah explained to the king that the reason for his sadness was that the city of Jerusalem was in ruins. After praying a brief prayer, a bold request was made to the king. Nehemiah asked permission to provide leadership to rebuild the walls of the city and access to the raw mate-

rials required to accomplish this construction project. King Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah permission to go and rebuild the walls, so his journey began.

3. Encourage Believers to Work together (Nehemiah 2:17-18; 3:1-2)

Nehemiah had the "good hand of God upon him." God sent Nehemiah, "a person from the outside," to Jews with a new perspective and new vision for this rebuilding project.

After making an initial night inspection, Nehemiah saw the obstacles, the challenges and the opportunity to make a great change. Next, Nehemiah spoke at an assembly and convinced the people of the need for a building program. A few voices of opposition arose as Sanballot, Tobiah and Geshem started to insult Nehemiah. Nehemiah spoke and boldly told Sanballot and his friends that "the hand of the Lord was upon them, the God of heaven, He will prosper us" and allow us the opportunity to rebuild the walls. Nehemiah organized the people. Eliashib, the high priest and other priests started work on the sheep gate.

The sheep gate in the wall surrounding Jerusalem was located at the northeast corner of the city. The total length of the wall was approximately a mile and a half.

When you read Nehemiah you can see his determination. You also can see him waiting for God's timing. He did not get ahead of God. He prepared himself for the task at hand. One can also see that Nehemiah was a great leader; the Lord used Nehemiah, because he must have absorbed many leadership decisions made by the King Artaxerxes. I believe God uses every job and every hurt in our lives to prepare us for a future ministry. Although every job in our lives we have may not be glamorous, the Lord can use it to be a building block in our lives. If the Lord can use a cupbearer, he can use us also. Our job is to pray, stay in God's word and live a humble life. May we encourage Christians to come together as one mighty army for His service!

Alexander is Minister of Education, Harrisburg Church, Tupelo.

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Journeyman feels call to fight famine in West Africa

NIGER, West Africa — Villagers stand in a small huddle around a stack of 50-kilogram bags of rice, speaking the Tamashek language in heated tones.

"This is the hardest part," says Nate Gunter, a journeyman missionary working in Bankilare, Niger. "They're saying it's just not enough."

After working among the Tuareg people group in the bush village of Bankilare for two years, Gunter says he became accustomed to people begging for food, medicine, and money but it wasn't until he returned from a three-week conference in July 2005 that Gunter says he realized the despondency of the situation.

"I started asking around town and found out that some people out in the bush encampment areas had already died from hunger," Gunter says. "Many were sick. Many had been eating grass for a couple of months and had developed sicknesses related to nutrition. It was at that point I came back to Niamey and met with my supervisors and said, 'We need to do something about this.'"

Answering the call

During his senior year at Hannibal-LaGrange College in Hannibal, Mo., Gunter struggled with the decision of how to use his college degree. While juggling the demands of classes, ministry and work, Gunter says he contemplated everything from church work, to seminary, to military service.

"The more I prayed about it and sought God's heart, the more He made it clear He was not going to close any of the doors, but was going to ask me to just look to Him and follow Him through the right one," Gunter says.

As he considered his options, Gunter says he kept returning to the International Mission Board's Journeyman Program, which allows 20-something singles with a bachelor's degree to serve a two-year term in overseas missions.

As he continued to pray about his decision, Gunter says God began to lay the Black Tamashek people on his heart. Commonly recognized as the "slave class" of the Tuareg people, the Black Tamashek stood out to Gunter as a welcoming, unassuming people.

"Their culture definitely prizes relationships with friends and with family far above materialistic things, advancing their social status, anything like that," Gunter says.



FIGHTING FAMINE — Journeyman Nate Gunter initiated famine relief efforts in Niger, and worked closely with Niamey partners to distribute rice to those villages that are in the greatest need. (IMB photo)

As a result of the changing political and cultural climate of the Tuareg people group over the past 50 years, Gunter says he believes now is the opportune time to evangelize them.

"They're a people in the midst of change right now, and they're looking for new answers and looking for sure footing," Gunter says. "I really feel like it's an excellent time in the history of their people to confront them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Feeding the hungry

Faced with the devastating effects of hunger in Bankilare in July 2005, Gunter journeyed to Niamey to speak with Warren and Sharon Hessling, strategy coordinators for the Tuareg team, about the necessity of a hunger relief program in the village.

They came up with a plan to distribute 30 metric tons of rice in 25 kilogram portions to families in and around Bankilare. Gunter worked with his supervisors to begin a program involving registration cards and receipts.

"There's no way we can preach to people when they're starving," Warren Hessling says. "I'm sure we can't solve all the problems of poverty in the world, but we have to deal with those right in front of us, as much as we are able at least."

To meet both the spiritual and physical needs of those living in the Bankilare area, Gunter and Hessling arranged for a Tuareg Christian to minister to those receiving the rice during the distributions.

Mohammed, a local Tuareg pastor from the city of Niamey, frequently spoke with villagers who came to receive rice. He says the distribution was important to get people's attention so he could call them to Christ.

Though Bankilare villagers typically experience a "hungry season" between the months of August and October, Gunter attributes much of the 2005 famine to an invasion of desert locusts. Two weeks before the 2004 harvest, Gunter sat outside his mud brick hut in Bankilare and watched a swarm of locusts devastate Bankilare's millet crop.

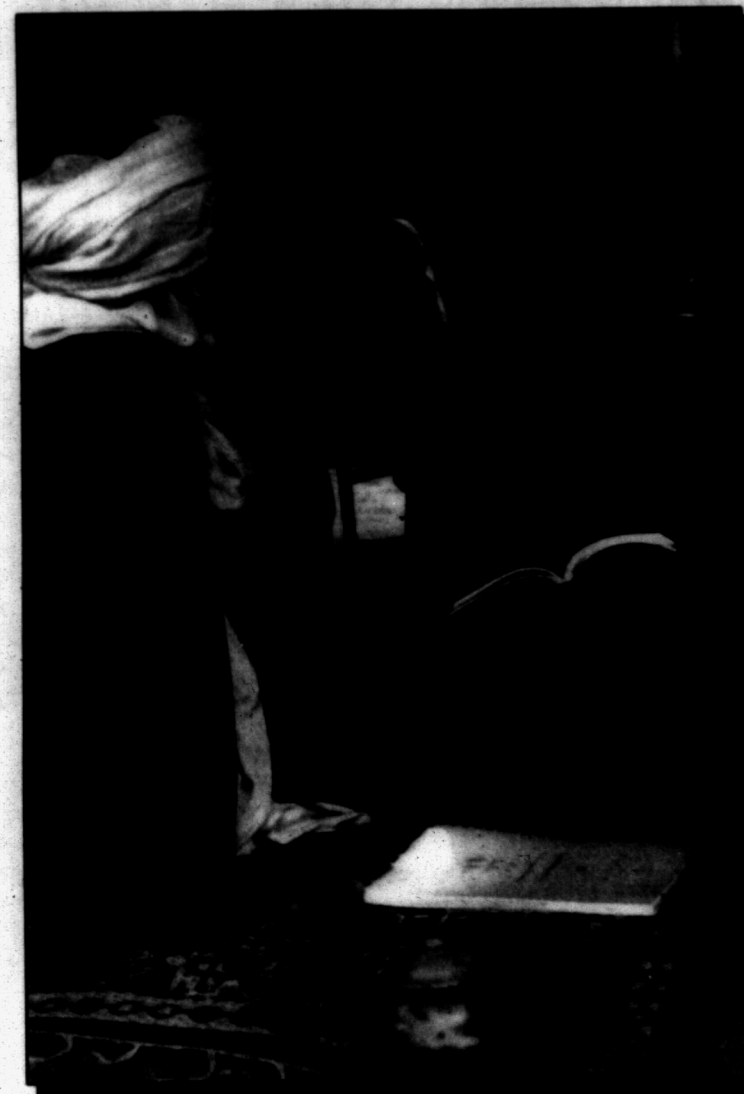
"Within 20 minutes, it was like a scene out of the book of Exodus," Gunter says. "I mean literally, from the ground as high as you could see in the sky, and in every direction. I wouldn't say it was an overestimate to say there were billions of locusts, just a swarm of locusts in and on everything. I could reach out with my hand and grab them as they went by."

With the lingering effects of no harvest in 2004, the 2005 "hungry season" hit hard but the need for food brought hundreds of people in for the rice distributions — hundreds who heard the Gospel for the first time.

A dream

Gunter was able to lead Moussa, a Bankilare storekeeper, to Christ through his relief efforts. At first, Moussa disagreed with Gunter about who should receive the rice and returned home, resolving never to speak to him again.

"Afterward, I had a dream, and in the dream a man said to me 'I am Jesus. I ask you to hold Nate's hand,'" Moussa says.



LIFESTYLE WITNESS — Journeyman Nate Gunter strikes up conversation with a Tuareg man in Niger. In keeping with African culture, Gunter spent many afternoons drinking tea and talking with other villagers. (IMB photo)

When Moussa awoke, he prayed that Gunter would visit him. "When Nate came and I explained to him what happened, I was at peace with him," Moussa says. "That is when I found myself at peace with Christ."

Looking back on the distribution, Gunter says he now can see how God used the project to further the Gospel.

"It's come quickly and it's gone quickly," Gunter says. "But I feel we've done a lot of good, and we've definitely been able to open several doors, I think, for future Gospel ministry opportunities in the area."

Editor's notes: Some names in this article have been changed for security reasons. Nate Gunter completed his two-year journeyman service at the end of 2005. The West Africa missionary teams need more young men to help take the Gospel to the peoples of their region. To find out how you can serve, visit GoWestAfrica.org.

Grenada churches to host Jan. Community Women's Conference

GRENADA, Ms. (Special) — A trio of Mississippi Baptist churches in Grenada will host Community Women's Conference on January 19-20, with special guest Lisa Welch, who starred for several years in the NBC television series *Facts of Life*.

Welch is the founder of MomTime ministries and MomTime Get-A-Ways. She has authored several books and received a Gold Medallion nomination for her book, *Creative Correction*, and she also recently received an Angel Award for her dedication to promoting quality, family-oriented communication.

Welch will be sharing with women of all ages at the conference on the topic of, "Be Still and Know that I am God." Praise and worship will be led by Kim Hill. For more information and to register, contact First Church, Grenada at (662) 226-3661. Web site: www.fbcgrenada.org.



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